NPS RGS 2617

TRAIL AND CAMPSITE EROSION SURVEY FOR GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Part IV: The Description of Individual Trails

RESEARCH/RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REPORT No. 16

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SOUTHEAST REGION

UPLANDS FIELD RESEARCH LABORATORY
GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK
TWIN CREEKS AREA
GATLINBURG, TENNESSEE 37738

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
LYRASIS Members and Sloan Foundation

http://archive.org/details/trailcampsiteero04brat

TRAIL AND CAMPSITE EROSION SURVEY

FOR

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Part IV: The Description of Individual Trails

RESEARCH/RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REPORT NO. 16

Susan Power Bratton
Matthew G. Hickler
James H. Graves

1977

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Southeast Regional Office
Natural Science and Research Division
Uplands Field Research Laboratory
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Gatlinburg, Tennessee 37738

Bratton, Susan P., Matthew G. Hickler and James H. Graves. 1977. Trail and Campsite Erosion Survey for Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Part IV: The Description of Individual Trails. NPS-SER Research/ Resources Management Report No. 16. 331 pp.

Note that the number at the top of the page refers to the trail's number in the survey. The trails are either listed by name or by the positions of the trailheads. The categories at the end of the descriptions: "Trail" and "Campsite," are recommendations for future trail management.

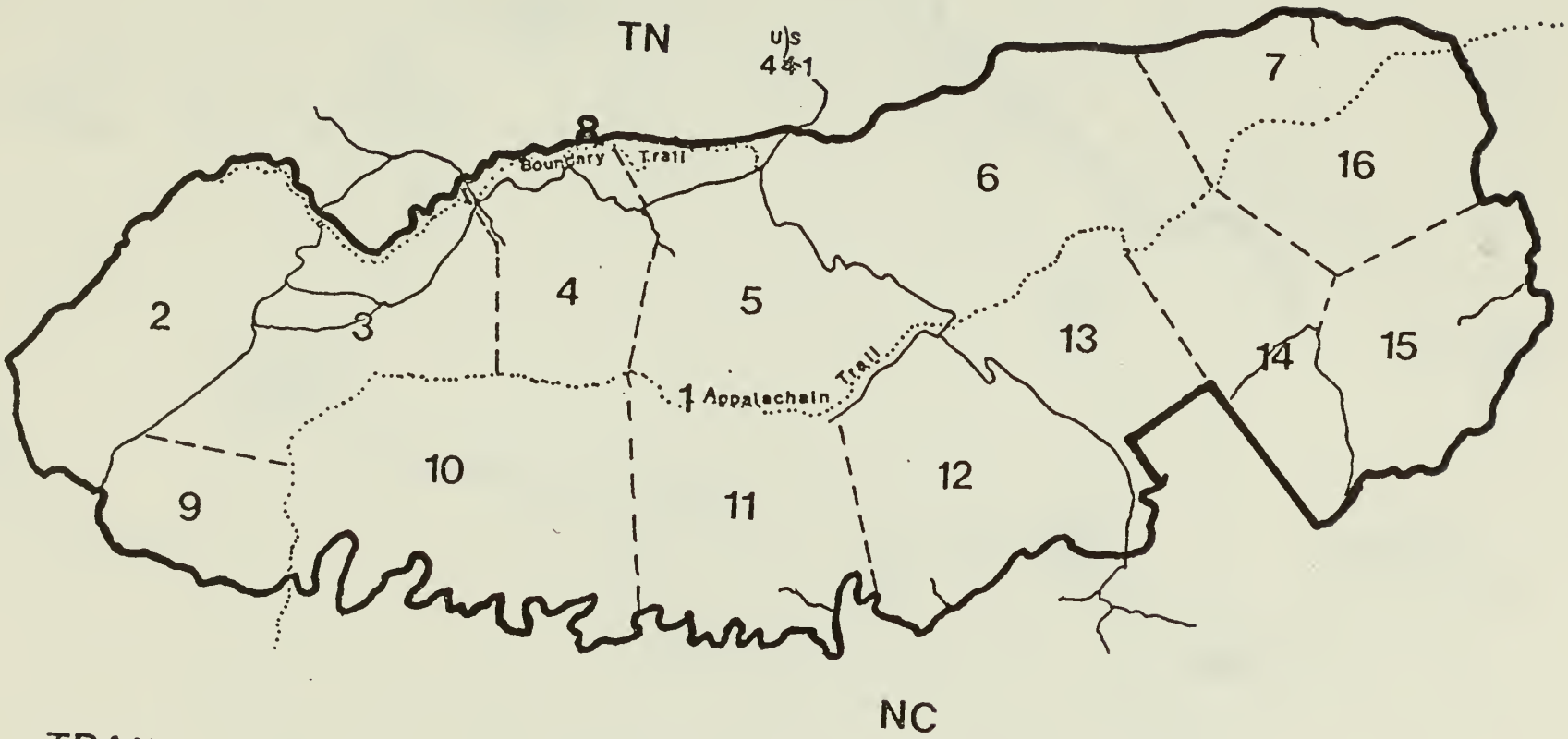
The recommendations for increases or decreases in use are based on the condition of the trails and do not consider problems like number of encounters with other visitors. In planning for the whole park, visitor density and the amount of maintenance economically feasible will also be important factors. Most of the recommendations are aimed at maintaining conditions that are, at least, average.

A map of the sections is shown in Figure 1. The exact positions of the trails are shown in a map preceding each section.

Note that a "guffer reroute" is a short unmaintained trail which usually crosses a switchback or goes off the trail to a campsite. A "manway" is a longer trail that goes up a creek or a ridge and does not necessarily connect pieces of the maintained trail system.

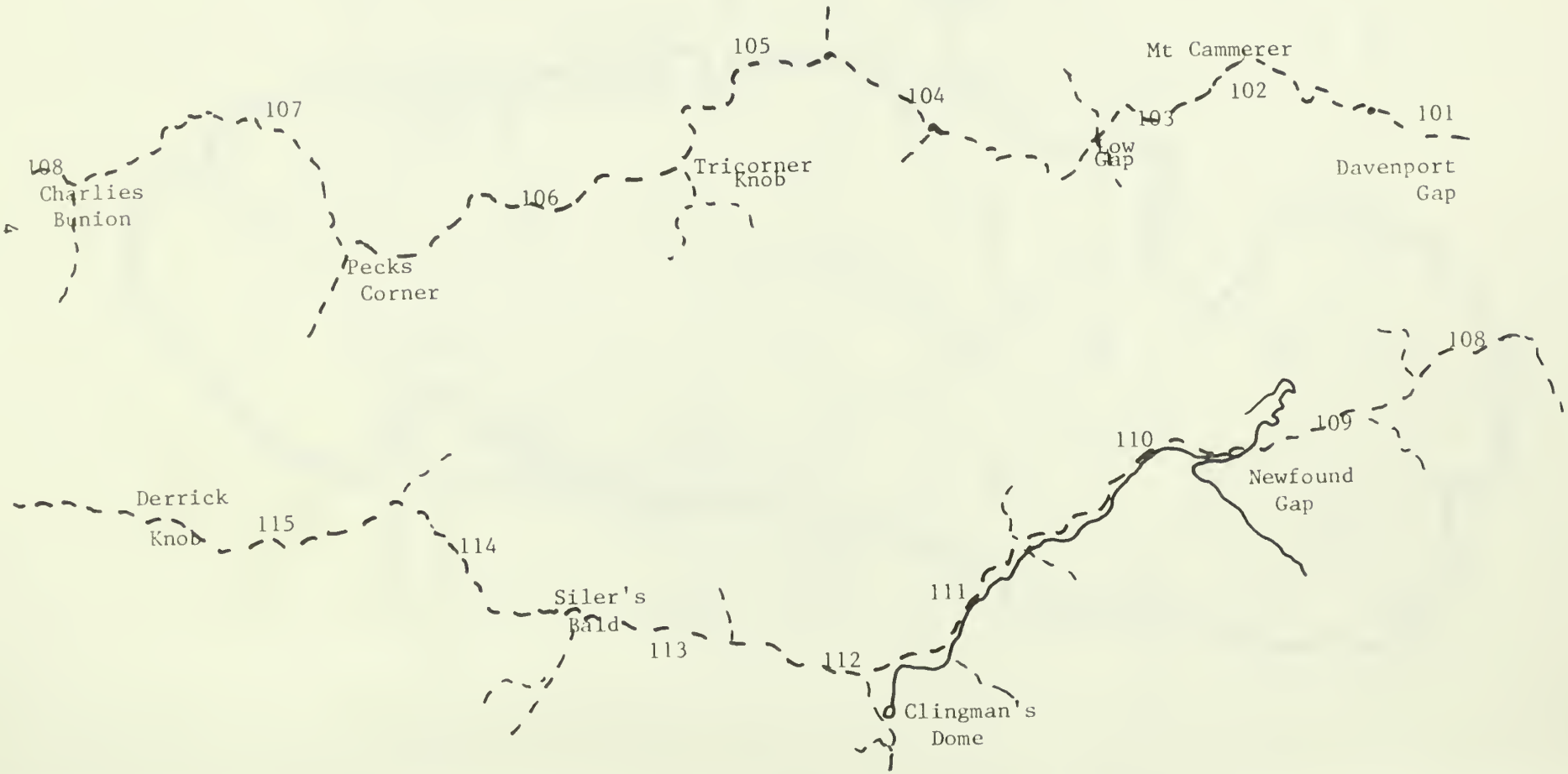
This is the last volume in a four-part series on trail and campsite erosion in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It contains written descriptions of most of the trails sampled. In general, the descriptions were prepared immediately after the trails were sampled and were written by the persons who did the measurements. A few descriptions were written at a later date and these are indicated in the text. The vast majority were prepared by Susan P. Bratton, Matthew G. Hickler, and James H. Graves. A few were written by Elaine Joyal and Larry Zucchino. Susan Bratton edited the descriptions and rewrote those that were not in the correct format.

In general, these descriptions represent the opinions of the investigator at the time the trail was walked. The description of the type and amount of visitor use is a "best guess," based on the field experience of the investigators. The recommendations about future use and maintenance are those of the authors, not of the National Park Service. These are also based on field experience and are not a quantitative attempt at planning for the park. We think the descriptions provide a useful, quick reference for managers and can also be used by interpreters and rangers who are interested in conditions in different parts of the park.



TRAIL
SECTIONS

SECTION 1 - APPALACHIAN TRAIL



SECTION 1 - APPALACHIAN TRAIL

TRAILS 101, 102 AND 103

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

DAVENPORT GAP TO LOW GAP

This trail section is used by day hikers, backpackers, and horseback parties. Mount Cammerer is a long day hike from Cosby, but offers good views and wild flowers (in May particularly).

This section of the trail runs along the old jeep road to the Cammerer Fire Tower, and varies from 2.2 meters to 1.2 meters in width. In general, the trail is in average condition. A section of the mile west of the cut-off to Cammerer is moderately rutted and a few sections have exposed roots and a rough surface for walking. Water erosion is in evidence, particularly coming down from Cammerer toward the intersection with the trail which returns to Cosby across the face of the mountain. Below Davenport Gap shelter, the trail widens to 2.0 meters.

The trail to Mount Cammerer Fire Tower resembles the Appalachian Trail nearby. The trail is deeply rutted after the jeep trail ends, and tends to be worn to bedrock. It is probably stable, but is difficult to walk on.

This section of the Appalachian Trail has a heavy concentration of illegal campsites. At the time this section was sampled, there were four sites scattered along the Appalachian Trail between Low Gap and Davenport Gap shelter and seven near the Cammerer Fire Tower. The frequency of illegal camping near the fire tower is very high. Davenport Gap shelter is well maintained. There is some erosion on a guffer reroute above the shelter.

This trail section should probably retain its present level of use, although an increase in foot use to Cammerer is possible. The illegal camping problem is related to the presence of an old site at Cammerer, and the distance of this hiking objective from the nearest road. The ridge at Cammerer is not very wide, and offers no possibilities for a good maintained legal site. The nearby beech gaps (such as Low Gap) should be excluded from consideration because of their delicate understories and good wild flowers. The problem around Cammerer either requires better enforcement or the establishment of a legal site. It may not be possible to choose one with water nearby.

Trail - Maintain at present level of usage, allowing for increase in foot traffic inherent in present trends of trail use.

Campsites - Investigate the problem on Cammerer. Adding a small site might be possible.

TRAILS 104 AND 105

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

LOW GAP TO TRICORNER

This section of trail is primarily used by backpackers, and day hikers from Cosby may climb to Low Gap, Inadu Knob, or Mount Guyot.

In general, the Appalachian Trail in this section is suffering from water erosion, and there are extensive areas of exposed rock. A few flats have mud holes or excessively worn areas. In areas where mud is a problem, the trail is usually less than 1.0 meter in width. Cosby Knob shelter is somewhat better than average for an Appalachian Trail shelter. There are a few problems with illegal camping, such as at the flat used for a helicopter landing site on Old Black but, in general, the slopes are too steep and the trail too far away from roads for this to be an important problem.

The trail can continue at the present level of use and could probably tolerate a small increase in day hiker use, as increased use is not likely to result in further damage.

Trail - Maintain at present level and access.

Campsites - Maintain at present level.

TRAIL 106

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

TRICORNER TO PECKS CORNER

This section of the Appalachian Trail is used almost exclusively by backpackers because of its distance from roads with visitor access. Most of the backpackers are on trips longer than overnight.

Horse plowing and, to a lesser extent, foot plowing, have created problems with mud in this section. The worst difficulty is on the flats, which tend to be poorly drained in spruce-fir forests. Some areas, particularly those near Tricorner, are deeply rutted by horse and foot traffic combined with rain water runoff.

Pecks Corner shelter has the usual erosion along manways and damage due to firewood gathering. Tricorner has some deep and badly rutted manways which run above the water source. There is an area worn to bare rock in front of the shelter. Vegetation damage is extensive. Campsite 43 is very muddy and poorly drained, and is suffering from some bank erosion. There is a group of illegal campsites above Tricorner shelter. These are better drained than the shelter area, but the ridge top is very narrow and not capable of supporting a large number of campers.

maintenance or, more likely, further restriction of horse use. Campsite 43 is a poor place to camp in wet weather, and relocating the site should be considered. Having a horse camp on the Appalachian Trail is encouraging problems that are already chronic. It would probably be better to add a horse camp or two at lower elevations and discourage heavy horse use along the ridge top.

Trail - Maintain at present level of backpackers.

Campsites - No new sites should be added. Campsite 43 should be reviewed.

TRAIL 107

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL -

PECKS CORNER AT HUGHES RIDGE TRAIL TO CHARLIES BUNION

Day hiker use declines abruptly at Charlies Bunion and the Sawteeth. Although a few day hikers may be heading on out the Appalachian Trail or down one of the trails towards Smokemont, this section is largely used by backpackers.

The horse trail around Charlies Bunion is water eroded and rutted although very narrow. The trail around the Tennessee side of the Bunion is prone to slides and bank erosion. There are a few ruts in the sections near the Bunion, and the trail is worn down to bare rock in places. The trail is generally less than 1.2 meters in width and provides a good walking surface.

The area around False Gap Shelter is poorly drained and floods in bad weather. The guffer reroute on the trail to the shelter is one of the worst in the park, and makes walking difficult.

This section of trail is heavily used during the summer and it would probably be best to keep the backpacker traffic stable. No new campsites are needed, and the steep slopes provide few good potential sites. False Gap shelter would be difficult to relocate,

but some remedy for the poor drainage (possibly more maintenance) needs to be considered. With the shelter removed, using the same site for tents may not be desirable.

Trail - Maintain use at present level.

Campsites - No additional sites possible.

TRAILS 107, 108 AND 109

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL - CHARLIES BUNION TO NEWFOUND GAP

This section of trail receives extremely heavy use from day hikers, and is a main access route for backpackers. Day hikers are attracted by the easy parking at Newfound Gap and the good vistas offered by Charlies Bunion.

The trail is highly compacted and widened out to Newfound Gap, but this section is intensively maintained. The tree roots are already cut through and the surface is relatively smooth. The worn width usually is about the same width as the trail cut, but there is no serious bank erosion. The walking surface is stable, if somewhat stony. Between the junction with Sweat Heifer and the junction with the Boulevard, there are a number of muddy areas and the trail has widened as a result. When wet, this section is poor enough to slow hikers and force them to use the sides of the trail. Between the Boulevard junction and Ice Water Springs shelter, the Appalachian Trail has eroded to bedrock and is about .4 of a meter deep. The trail is unlikely to deepen much further, although there is still some water erosion on the sides. The walking surface is very stony and uneven. The section from Ice Water to the Bunion is shallower, but stony and suffering from water erosion. The erosion

problems in this section stem from a combination of intensive use and the placement of the trail in spruce-fir forest.

Two chronic illegal campsites are located in the beech gap at Sweat Heifer junction. High use of these sites is probably due to their proximity to the road. Some of the vegetation damage may be attributed to picnickers. Illegal camping is also a problem at the Boulevard junction, although the sites are barely noticeable due to vegetation damage from other sources. Ice Water Springs shelter has a partially open canopy and a large grassy area popular with tent (illegal) campers. Ice Water is surrounded by a large number of stumps and is crisscrossed with guffer reroutes. There is little mud. The removal of one shelter may reduce some of the damage.

Use of this section of trail exceeded its capacity years ago, and now the trail requires intensive maintenance. The hiker density is not likely to decrease in the future. With improved maintenance in the muddy areas, vegetation damage could probably be stabilized. This trail should be classed as a widened and intensively used section, probably requiring special attention from maintenance.

No additional campsites should be established in this section because of its intensive day use and the possibility of vandalism

and vegetation damage. The section is also much too close to Newfound Gap parking area to consider additional campsites. Discouraging the illegal camping would be desirable, because two of the sites are in a good wild flower area.

Trail - Intensive maintenance.

Campsites - No increase, and better enforcement of illegal camping regulations.

TRAILS 110 AND 111

THE AT - NEWFOUND GAP TO CLINGMANS DOME

The trail is heavily used by backpackers, and receives a substantial amount of day hiker traffic as well. Ample parking and direct access to the Appalachian Trail at both Clingmans Dome and Newfound Gap make both of these places popular starting points for backpacking trips and day hikes on the Appalachian Trail.

The trail runs, for the most part, through spruce-fir forest types, but occasionally intersects beech gaps and northern hardwood forests. In the spruce-fir, the trail is badly rutted and excessively muddy. The surface is worn to bedrock over much of its length and is apparently still deteriorating. In the beech gaps and northern hardwoods near Newfound Gap, the trail improves somewhat and there are sections that are at carrying capacity, but the overall condition of the trail is poor despite intensive maintenance.

The Mount Collins shelter receives continuous heavy use. The area is clear of firewood, and live trees are being cut for firewood. Vegetation damage is intense in the immediate vicinity of the shelter. There are three illegal campsites on the trail. All are small and causing little damage, and are probably emergency sites with little usage.

Much of the surface of this trail is already irreparably damaged, and intensive maintenance will be necessary if further deterioration is to be prevented. The Mount Collins shelter suffers from problems related to over-use, typical of most Appalachian Trail shelters.

Trail - A reduction in backpacker traffic would be desirable. Intensive maintenance is necessary.

Campsites - No new sites should be added. The Mount Collins shelter should be reviewed.

TRAILS 112, 113, 114, AND 115

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL - CLINGMANS DOME TO DERRICK KNOB

The Appalachian Trail, between Clingmans Dome and Silers Bald, is one of the most heavily used sections of trail in the park, and one of the most severely eroded as well. The already heavy stream of backpackers are joined by numerous day hikers originating at Clingmans Dome and hiking to Silers Bald and return. Balds are a major visitor attraction, and Silers is one of the most accessible, being about 5 miles from the parking area at Clingmans Dome. The 2 miles of trail between Clingmans Dome and the shelter at Double Spring Gap gets additional round trip use from the less ambitious backpackers who want an overnight backcountry camping experience without the long distance hiking which is usually involved. West of Silers Bald, the trail gets the normally heavy backpacker use and moderate day hiker use which is typical for most of the Appalachian Trail. The trail is a designated horse trail.

Between the Dome and Double Spring Gap, heavy use, coupled with steep grades, have created a serious erosion problem. Almost the entire surface is rocky and deeply rutted, often down to bedrock, and very little of the trail surface is covered in soil. The areas where soil still remains on the trail cut become mudholes

in wet weather. These have been widened, both by hikers skirting the muddy areas and hog-wallowing activity, to the point where some are more than 8 meters wide and as long, or longer. Many of the steeper sections become rivulets in wet weather and run with an inch or more of water; water bars have not been effective in preventing the loss of topsoil. The short access trail between the parking area and the Appalachian Trail is in poor condition in this respect and is in need of intensive maintenance or should be closed. The trail improves somewhat as it drops out of the spruce-fir zone and into northern hardwoods but it remains, for the most part, above carrying capacity, with many ruts, rocky area, and mudholes. The grassy balds and old burn scars with their grass swards are badly rutted and muddy. Reroutes around ruts and mudholes have caused widening of the trail in some areas. On the approach to Double Spring Gap, a series of parallel ruts can be seen where reroutes around rutted sections have themselves become rutted. About 2 miles west of Derrick Knob the trail improves and, although it is muddy in wet weather, the surface is narrow and relatively smooth and is at its proper carrying capacity.

The shelters at Double, Silers, and Derrick have the same problems with firewood gathering and trash as other Appalachian Trail shelters. In addition, the south spring at Double Springs is

used as a hog wallow and is extremely muddy, making it a questionable drinking water source. The pipe on the north slope doesn't flow at all in dry spells. There is evidence of illegal camping around all the shelters and a moderate-use illegal site at Buckeye Gap. Patrol is needed to discourage illegal camping.

To discourage use of the first section of the Appalachian Trail west of Clingmans Dome by day hikers will be difficult, if not impossible. The backpacker load, on the other hand, can be reduced by opening up other acceptable long distance routes and patroling for illegal camping. In any case, the section between Clingmans Dome and Double Springs, and to a lesser extent, on to Silers, is in need of intensive maintenance. The access trail from the parking area is in exceptionally poor condition, and its status should be reviewed.

Trail - Intensive maintenance is necessary, and some means of reducing hiker load would be desirable. A ban on horse use should be considered.

Campsites - Intensive patrol for illegal camping. Ban fires? No new campsites in the vicinity. More regular trash removal.

TRAILS 116, 117 AND 118

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL - DERRICK TO DOE KNOB

The trail gets extremely heavy usage from backpackers, horseback riders, and, in some sections, day hikers as well. The balds at Russell and Spence Field are particularly popular with day hikers.

This section of the trail is generally in very poor condition, with only a few isolated sections which can be rated as being at or below carrying capacity. Extensive muddy areas abound throughout, and the problem is accentuated by hogs wallowing the trail. In some areas, the trail has been widened past 5 meters by people skirting mudholes. The surface is generally rocky throughout, and on some of the steeper slopes the soil has been completely washed away, leaving a surface of loose stones and bedrock, making walking difficult. Some sections are badly rutted. On the balds, which have deep soil easily removed by water, and on the steep slopes between Spence Field and Thunderhead, the ruts are particularly severe. The tree roots have been cut through over much of the trail and in other areas they have been exposed and are in danger of being killed.

The shelters at Mollies Ridge, Russell Field, Spence Field, and Derrick Knob receive continuous heavy use throughout the year. Deadwood for fires is scarce in the vicinity of the shelters and, as a consequence, live trees are commonly cut for firewood. As an example of the magnitude of the problem, at Russell Field cut stumps were present in an area extending 285 meters by 275 meters around the shelter, and the area was clear of deadwood suitable for burning over an even greater area.

Trash levels are also very high around the shelters. There is evidence of illegal camping around all the shelters. This stems from the numerous hikers who fail to secure permits for shelter space and must sleep outside the shelters when they are full.

Maintenance in the form of water bars and culverts is badly needed in some sections but, in the long run, if the trail is to be returned to acceptable standards, some means of reducing hiker load must be employed. Active patrol and enforcement of shelter space rationing would cut down significantly on hiker use.

Extensive cutting of live trees for firewood is a problem common around the shelters.

No additional shelters or campsites should be located on or near the Appalachian Trail, as these would only encourage increased hiker use.

Trail - Intensive maintenance. Some means of reducing backpacker traffic should be considered.

Campsites - The status of shelters should be reviewed.

TRAIL 119

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL - DOE KNOB TO SASSAFRAS GAP

This section of the Appalachian Trail is used primarily by backpackers although an occasional long distance day hiker may pass over the trail. Horse use is permitted.

The trail is at and below carrying capacity for the most part, and could probably take a small increase in foot use. Moderate amounts of exposed rock are present on the steeper grades, but tread widths tend to be narrow, and the surface is relatively smooth.

The Birch Spring Gap shelter is heavily used and there are numerous cut stumps in the vicinity. The area is firewood clear. The area around the shelter is poorly drained and constantly muddy. The spring runs poorly and has much mud associated with it. It is within the high impact area of the shelter site, and the quality of the water is, therefore, questionable.

Trail - Slight increase is possible.

Campsites - Drainage and sanitation at the Birch Springs Gap shelter are poor. A more complete review of the shelter's status should be conducted. It may be wise to close or relocate it. In any event, a pit toilet should be installed.

TRAIL 120

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL - FONTANA TO SHUCKSTACK

This trail is heavily used by backpackers and moderately used by day hikers. It is generally in fair to poor condition, with a few stretches near Shuckstack in good condition. Water erosion on the corners of the switchbacks is a constant problem. The trail is on a steep grade and highly subject to erosion. More maintenance may help. The trail will probably continue to deteriorate with heavy use. There are a number of small illegal campsites in the gaps and near the fire tower. Adding a site near the fire tower might draw traffic from Twenty Mile, but the Appalachian Trail itself needs no more use.

Trail - Stabilize or decrease use.

Campsites - No additions except possibly at fire tower site.

SECTION 2 - ABRAMS CREEK

TRAIL 201

BEARD CANE TRAIL - CANE GAP TO THE PARK BOUNDARY

This road is used by horse parties, local people, and probably the occasional backpacker and day hiker. It has old homesites and a stream, but no views.

The road is in only fair condition. There are vehicle ruts and mudholes that would cause hikers to walk around the edge. Most of the area is poorly drained, and there is some erosion near the streams. The road could certainly stand more foot use if the mudholes were corrected. An increase in horse use, without increased maintenance, would probably make the present problems worse.

Campsite 2 is on a flood plain and probably is under water now and then. It does not appear to be heavily used, and the area could probably absorb a little more impact. The area offers several good possibilities for sites and could support more camping.

Trail - Repair and then increase use.

Campsites - Can be expanded.

TRAIL 202

COOPER ROAD - ABRAMS CREEK CAMPGROUND TO BENT CANE INTERSECTION

This section of road is used by day hikers, fishermen, backpackers, and horse parties (private). The main scenic attraction is the creek.

The road is in good-to-average condition, the main problem being water erosion, which does not interfere with walking to any great extent. The bank along the stream at the end of the road near the campground is compacted due to visitor use. Campsite 1 is in good condition and, although the forest floor is somewhat firewood clear through gathering and possibly through flooding, the site can tolerate more use. Illegal camping does not seem to be a problem right on the road, either due to the proximity of the trailhead to Campsite 1 or to good patrol and cleanup.

The area can stand more use and could probably tolerate some horse impact. It is probably not as important at this time to establish more campsites as it is to bring more backpackers and day hikers into Abrahms Creek area in general.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Increase use.

TRAILS 203, 204, AND 205

HANNAH MOUNTAIN TRAIL -

SCOTT GAP TO THE BOUNDARY TRAIL

The northern portion of this trail (above Cooper Creek) gets little use and, in many areas, is overgrown with vegetation. The lack of use of the trail has been, until recently, due to the lack of reasonably spaced campsites for backpackers. Its inaccessibility makes it unsuitable for day hikes. The recent establishment of a campsite near the Cooper Road intersection has made the trail into a suitable backpacker route. The upper part of the trail gets a fair amount of horse traffic, much of it originating from outside the park in Millers Cove. Low hanging branches and other obstructions have been cleared from the upper section and the manway which is an access to the trail from Millers Cove. Below Cooper Road, both day hiker and backpacker traffic pick up, but the trail remains below its carrying capacity.

For the most part, the trail is in excellent condition, being narrow and covered in a surface of uncompacted soil and leaf litter. In the northern portion there are areas of moderate to heavy horse plow in the loose organic soil, and there are muddy areas along Cane Creek at most of the stream crossings and below seeps. Aside from occasional mudholes and horse

plow, the trail is in excellent condition and an increase in foot use is possible.

The delicate nature of the soil in the coves makes most of this trail unsuitable for horse traffic, and if any increase in either foot or horse use seems evident, horses will have to be banned from the trail. As it now stands, a small increase in foot use on the trail is possible, but any sizeable increase will have to be coupled with intensified maintenance to take care of the mud along Cane Creek and addition of water bars on steep grades.

Campsite 3 at the northern end of the trail is not marked and has the appearance of an infrequently used illegal site, but because of its location in a rich understory area, any increase in use is not advisable. If demand for space at this site increases substantially, it should be relocated in a less sensitive area. Newly established Campsite 11 is likely to stimulate backpacker use on the trail. It is in an excellent location, but there is no room for expansion. There is an excellent potential site in an old clearing just north of this site which could be used if demand for space increases.

There is very little illegal camping along the trail, but there is one regularly used site just south of the Abrams

Creek Ford. The ford is very difficult, even at low water, and would be impossible to cross after heavy rains; and the site is probably used primarily as an emergency site by backpackers stopped by high water. Fishermen may use the site on occasion, as well. The site is too close to the river for good sanitation. It is muddy and appears to flood on occasion. It would be worthwhile to establish a legal site in a proper location on the west side of the river to discourage use of this site.

Trail - A small increase in foot use is possible under present system, but with maintenance, a large increase would be possible. Horse traffic should be kept to a minimum or banned. The effect of the new site near Cooper Road on stimulating backpacker use should be monitored.

Campsites - Establish site south of the Abrams Creek Ford; otherwise, sites are adequate for present needs but will have to be relocated if demand increases.

TRAIL 206

THE HANNAH MOUNTAIN TRAIL

SCOTT GAP TO SAM'S GAP

This section of trail is largely used by backpackers and private horse parties. A few day hikers may come out of Sam's Gap and return to Cades Cove, but the trail, in general, offers few scenic attractions for the day hiker.

The trail is generally in good-to-excellent condition, with only a few local areas of bank erosion and some water erosion on the steep stretches. There is almost no evidence of damage due to excessive use by hikers or horses.

There is very little evidence of illegal camping, although an off-schedule party may occasionally stop in one of the gaps. There is a small illegal site near Parsons Branch Road, and most of the illegal camping is probably concentrated in this area. The campsite at Flint Gap is right on the trail and near the water source. The camp is not over used, however, and can probably continue at its present level. The shelter at Scott Gap is in relatively good condition. Most of the damage is related to firewood gathering in the immediate area and some erosion near the stream and the marshy area between the shelter and the privy. This site can also continue at

present levels of use. There is an illegal site near the trail intersection above Scott Gap, and the manway to the shelter is showing signs of water erosion (it runs straight down slope).

These areas can certainly continue at present use levels and could probably tolerate an increase in foot traffic. The Hannah Mountain Trail offers few possibilities for adding campsites with water, but an extra site near Parsons Branch might be considered, particularly for winter use.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Maintain at present level or add site.

TRAIL 207

COOPER ROAD - CANE GAP

TO THE INTERSECTION WITH HANNAH MOUNTAIN

This road is probably used largely by backpackers and horse parties. There are few scenic attractions, other than some partially tree-blocked views off the ridge.

The trail has some water erosion, but is generally in good condition. With abandonment as a jeep road, water problems may increase. The trail can tolerate more use of all kinds. There is no camping in this section (and no water), but some could be added if suitable water sources were found.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Increase possible off slope, if access trails constructed.

TRAIL 208

LITTLE BOTTOMS TRAIL

This trail is in very good condition, and a small increase in traffic is possible. The trail is used by backpackers to reach Campsites 1 and 17. Much of the traffic probably comes from Cades Cove. This trail is also accessible as a day hike from the Abrams Creek campground.

The trail is narrow (mostly under 80 centimeters), but the surface is quite compacted and stony in places. Water action is evident in some of the steeper areas. Overall, however, the trail is in good condition, and a small increase in traffic is possible.

Campsite 17 is well located in an old homesite area, but is beginning to spread through the forest. Vegetation damage, due to firewood gathering and trampling, is fairly heavy. The large number of firepits indicates heavy use at times. The site could stand continuous usage by small numbers of people, but a decrease in large group usage should be considered to allow the vegetation to recover and to prevent further damage.

Trail - No change.

Campsites - Decrease large group usage at Campsite 17.

TRAIL 209

RABBIT CREEK TRAIL -

ABRAM CREEK RANGER STATION TO SCOTT GAP (ABANDONED JEEP TRAIL)

This trail is lightly used by the more adventurous backpackers and day hikers. A few horses come through from Cades Cove on occasion as well. The trail head at the ranger station is somewhat difficult to climb. This fact probably discourages many potential users.

The trail is in excellent condition throughout, and could stand moderate increase in both foot and horse traffic. The original cut was jeep width, but in many areas, vegetation has become established along the sides, narrowing the walking area to trail width. Most of the trail has a good cover of litter and topsoil, and there is only minor compaction.

There are no campsites on the trail, and there are probably enough camps on adjoining trails to take care of camping needs in the area.

Trail - Try to stimulate backpacker use. Increase in horse use is possible.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 210

COOPER CREEK JEEP ROAD -

CADES COVE TO HANNAH MOUNTAIN TRAIL

This is a jeep road which is in good condition, and could stand more impact by either horses or hikers. The road has almost no scenic attractions other than nice woods and small streams.

Campsites might be added about 2 miles out from the cove and there are a number of places to consider. Some of the flatter areas on the ridge top would probably not suffer much erosion. There are numerous small creeks, having flats of a suitable size for a camping area, but some erosion would probably result from heavy rains. Campsites would act as an attraction to visitors, and it might be possible to draw some of the traffic from some of the more heavily used trails. This section of road is close to 7 miles long, and could certainly stand one or two sites. These sites should be located so that short loops are possible. Scout troops would have difficulty damaging the area, and it is probably about as suitable as any place in the park for zone camping.

One difficulty in trying to increase hiker use in this area is that there is not much parking space near the trail head.

This could be corrected by either creating space or by making a short connecting trail from the Abrams Falls Parking Area (such a manway may already exist, but it would need to be marked, maintained, etc.)

The first ridge would be a good place to put a "near the road" type site for groups that get in late, and for those that just want to get out in the woods. The area should be easy to patrol because of the road and the proximity of Cades Cove.

An increase in use is possible for both foot and horse travelers, and some efforts probably should be made in this direction.

An increase in campsites would not cause any damage and would probably help draw people into the area. Because the "trail" is actually a jeep road and is largely in second growth timber, the area lacks wilderness atmosphere, but this may be counteracted by the lack of day hikers. It could provide some nice quiet campsites for those who want to get away from it all or want a short loop type trip. The road would not be damaged by large groups, but finding sites which would handle large groups might require some clearing or extra maintenance.

Trail - Increase foot and horse use. Needs parking area.

Campsites - Possibly add one or two.

TRAIL 213

RABBIT CREEK JEEP TRAIL - CADES COVE TO SCOTT GAP

This trail gets moderate use by backpackers and day hikers. It provides access to the Scott Gap shelter and Campsite 15 from Cades Cove. It can also be used as part of a day hike loop from Cades Cove to Abrams Falls and back again.

The trail runs along the bed of an old surfaced jeep trail and is in very good condition for the most part. Small sections at the beginning and end are critically in need of maintenance due to severe problems with water erosion, but if these were taken care of, a moderate increase in foot and horse traffic would be possible. Vegetation and leaf litter have begun to cover the sides of the orginal cut so that the trail surface averages about 150 centimeters in width, about half that of the original cut.

Campsite 15 (Rabbit Creek) seems to get a moderate amount of use, with large groups occupying the site on occasion. Firewood levels are low, and cut stumps are evident around the site. The site is nearing the upper limit of its carrying capacity and no increase in use should be contemplated. A decrease in large group use would prevent further expansion

of the site. A new site established on Andy McCully Ridge would help stimulate backpacker use without adding to the burden on Campsite 15.

Trail - Increase in foot and horse traffic would be possible if trouble spots were attended to.

Campsites - Decrease in large group use at Rabbit Creek would be desirable. There is a good potential site on Andy McCully Ridge.

TRAILS 211 AND 212

THE ABRAMS FALLS TRAIL

This trail is very intensively used by day hikers, and also supports a fair amount of backpacker traffic. The trail is widened to fill the whole trail cut, and in some cases, is widened beyond the cut. The trail is well drained and can take the impact relatively well, but it is wearing down to bedrock in many areas and has the appearance of a compacted jeep road. Typical for heavy day hiker areas, there are a number of guffer reroutes in the rockier places, and some severe erosion near the falls.

There is some illegal camping in the area, most of it is concentrated at the falls (where it can do very little damage) or beyond in the flats by the creek.

The trail is already heavily used, so no campsites are recommended for the area near the falls. (There are not many suitable places in any case.) Trail maintenance should continue to be intensive. Some action might be taken to repair the damage done around the falls. The manways could be blocked off or possibly be replaced by a small maintained trail switchbacked on the slope, or steps.

Adding a campsite at the far end of the trail would draw more backpackers into an area which is already too heavily used. A site could be added near the intersection with the Hatcher Mountain trail, if the use could be limited to two or three tents. Many people camp here anyway, probably either because they do not want to ford the creek or because they do not wish to go any farther (intersection is about 4 miles out). No sites should be considered in the area between the flats near the ford and Cades Cove.

The impact on the trail to the falls is much greater than on the section after, but it is also close to carrying capacity.

Trail - No increase in use recommended; some diversion of backpackers desirable.

Campsites - No campsites should be added before the falls; addition after the falls should be at least 4 miles from Cades Cove and depends on planning for the remainder of the area.

TRAIL 215

ROAD TO GOLDMINE GAP

This road is probably rarely used by anyone but local people on day trips. It does not go anywhere that is likely to interest hikers from outside the area, and has no campsites.

The road has some erosion problems from water and mud near the stream crossings.

The maintenance of this road for hikers is doubtful; from a hiking point of view it probably should be a trail or manway.

Trail - As a road, abandon; maintain for low level use.

Campsites - Probably too close to the boundary.

TRAIL 217

BUNKER HILL LEAD TRAIL

This trail is a dead-end jeep road accessed from Parsons Branch, leading to an excellent view from the top of the fire tower.

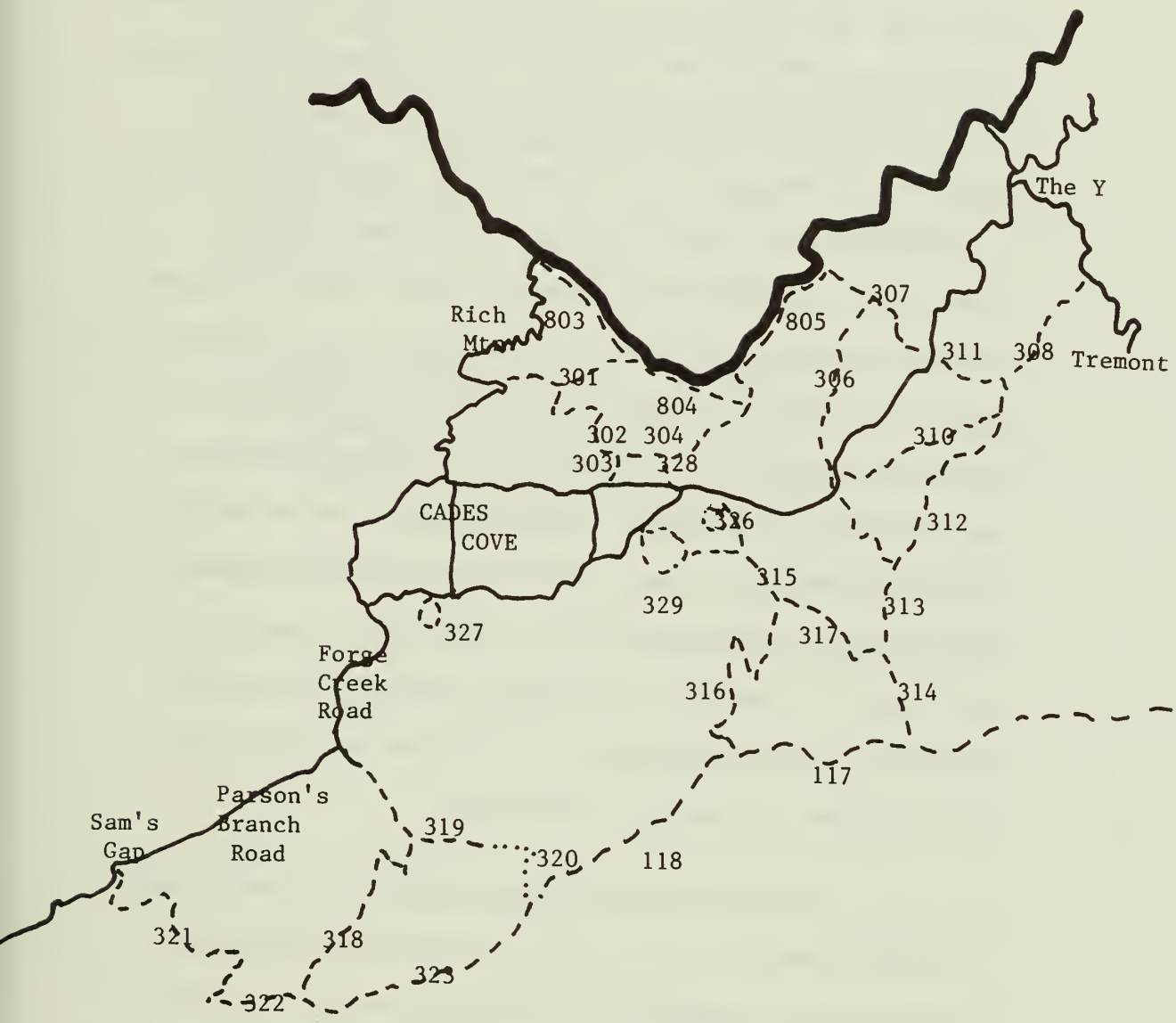
Erosion and rutting are evident, and a problem only near the trail head, where the slope is contributing to further accelerate damage. Much of the trail bed is completely overgrown in vegetation and an increase in traffic can be encouraged.

The tower site could be used for camping.

Trail - Publicize it as a good day hike.

Campsites - Possible site if Parsons Branch closed.

SECTION 3 - CADES COVE



TRAIL 301

INDIAN GRAVE GAP JEEP ROAD

This trail runs along an old jeep road which has recently been closed to all vehicle use. Between the Rich Mountain Road and the intersection with the Rich Mountain Trail, the trail is surfaced and designated a foot trail only. The trail is used by both backpackers and day hikers. Horseback riders traveling in the Rich Mountain area are more likely to access the area from the Cades Cove Loop Road. Above the junction with the Rich Mountain Trail, the trail is not surfaced. Horse use is permitted on this section, and both backpacker and day hiker use increases. The major day hiker attraction is the Rich Mountain Tower, which offers excellent vistas of Cades Cove and Tuckaleechee Cove. Backpackers commonly use the trail to access the Rich Mountain shelter and primitive Campsite 5. Horse parties use the trail as part of a loop from the horse concession at Cades Cove.

Aside from moderate amounts of bank erosion and a small amount of rutting, the trail is in very good condition and could probably stand a substantial increase in foot use or a small increase in horse traffic. The only badly eroded area is just above the Rich Mountain Road, where water from a seep runs in the trail cut. A properly maintained drainage ditch along the side of the trail would alleviate the problem.

There are no legal campsites on the trail, but the area around the Rich Mountain Lookout Tower is frequently used as an illegal site. The abandoned ranger cabin at the tower has been broken into and shows evidence of having been used for a shelter. The proximity of the tower to two legal camping facilities makes the use of the area for camping undesirable, and use should be discouraged.

Trail - Increase in use is possible.

Campsites - Discourage use of the Rich Mountain Tower area and abandoned ranger cabin.

TRAIL 302

CADES COVE LOOP ROAD TO INDIAN GRAVE GAP

JEEP ROAD VIA JOHN OLIVER'S

The trail gets heavy use from day hikers, horse parties, and backpackers. The lower one-third mile of the trail leads to the John Oliver Cabin and, as a consequence, this stretch is intensively used by visitors to Cades Cove. The trail forms part of a reasonable day hike, offering attractions such as the old fire tower on Rich Mountain and several good vistas of Cades Cove and Tuckaleechee Cove. The trail receives heavy horse use and can be accessed by bridle trails from the horse concession. Backpackers are attracted by the Rich Mountain shelter and access to two backcountry campsites.

As would be expected on such a heavy use trail, the trail has some serious erosion problems. Water action on the surface has caused extensive rutting, and most of the surface is rocky. Bank erosion is also extensive, and the banks are showing little stabilization.

There are no legal campsites along the trail, and only one infrequently used illegal campsite was encountered. The scarcity of water in the area and the proximity to two legal sites has probably discouraged illegal camping.

The trail has some serious erosion problems and is in need of maintenance, particularly water bars. It is unlikely that intensified maintenance can restore the surface, but it could probably help prevent further deterioration. A reduction in traffic load would be desirable, but there seems to be no practical means of accomplishing this. The short stretch of trail between John Oliver's place and the loop road is receiving heavy impact, and would be a good candidate for resurfacing.

Trail - Intensify maintenance. It may be desirable to surface the trail up to John Oliver's. A decrease in the traffic load is desirable, but not practical.

Campsites: No change.

TRAIL 303

CROOKED ARM TRAIL

This trail is heavily used by day hikers and horse parties as part of a day loop starting from the John Oliver Cabin. It can be reached directly from the horse concession via a bridle trail. Backpackers are also frequent users, being attracted by the campsites in the area.

The trail has exceeded its carrying capacity and has a battered, overused look to it. Much of the tread is nearly as wide as the cut, and buffer zone vegetation is being damaged. The surface is badly rutted and full of loose stones in many areas. Ascending Crooked Arm, the trail is cut in a series of tight switchbacks, and many guffer reroutes have become established. Many of these have eroded to bedrock and are in waist-deep ruts. The sides are eroding and becoming undercut, exposing tree roots and damaging vegetation along the sides.

Campsite 6 is located in a power line cut and is surrounded by a thicket of brambles and scrubby vegetation. The site is very small, with room for about three tightly packed tents. The site seems to get little use. Firewood levels are high

and vegetation damage minimal. There are three low-to-moderate use illegal sites near Campsite 6. These have probably become established, at least in part, due to the tight space and unappealing location of Campsite 6. Two of these are located on a small knoll about a quarter of a mile down the trail. Topography and drainage are ideal, and water is available a quarter of a mile down a manway to the Green Branch. The site has a good view and is private, being about 50 meters off the trail. This area would provide an ideal location for a maintained site, and it might be wise to move Campsite 6 here.

The trail is deteriorating due to heavy use. A decrease in traffic, particularly horses, is desirable if further deterioration is to be prevented. Increased maintenance would also be helpful, but it is doubtful if this alone can bring the trail up to carrying capacity. The guffer reroutes should be blocked off. Campsite 6 should probably be moved to the knoll a quarter of a mile south of its present location.

Trail - Decreased horse and hiker use is desirable, if practical. Water bars are needed in some areas, and the guffer reroutes on Crooked Arm should be blocked.

Campsites - Move Campsite 6.

TRAIL 304

BRIDLE TRAIL, JOHN OLIVER'S TO CROOKED ARM

This trail is heavily used by concessioners' horses and gets much day hiker use as well. The entire length of trail is in poor condition due to excessive horse traffic. Although the slope of the trail is quite flat, much of the trail is rutted, and rocks and tree roots have been exposed over a large portion of the trail's surface. The trail averages over 200 centimeters in width, and is continuing to widen as horses and hikers move to the sides to avoid having to walk over loose rocks which abound. Vegetation damage along the trail sides is apparent in many places. The banks are extensively eroded and show no signs of stabilizing.

Over-use by horses is causing the trail to deteriorate, and if it is to be maintained in good condition, use must be limited.

Trail - Limit horse use.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 305

BRIDLE TRAIL, CADES COVE LOOP ROAD TO CROOKED ARM

The trail is used exclusively by horses and provides access from the horse concession to other trails up Rich Mountain. The surface is wide and badly horse plowed and rutted. Water bars are needed to prevent loss of surface to erosion water. The surface is not stable, and maintenance is needed if the trail is to be stabilized without a major reduction in traffic. Surfacing in gravel and water bars will probably be necessary to stabilize the trail under its present traffic load.

Trail - Surface and install water bars if present traffic load is to be sustained.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 306

TURKEY PEN TRAIL

The beginning of the trail coming from Laurel Creek Road has some erosion problems and is in a poorly drained area. Old Campsite 7 was being used illegally when this trail was sampled, and this is probably not uncommon. Coming out of the campsite, there is some bank erosion and a small amount of water erosion. The trail is generally in good-to-average condition, and the upper end could probably sustain more foot traffic.

The trail would offer few views or other interesting features, especially in the summer. The overlook at White Oak Sink is interesting, but few visitors are familiar enough with the area to realize what they are seeing in terms of natural history.

The slopes on the trail are very steep, and there are almost no potential campsites. The area near the sink offers some possibilities for camping, and a site probably could be a established somewhere along the jeep road.

The area could tolerate more use, particularly if the lower end of the trail were better maintained. The main problem

is attracting visitors into the area. Accessibility should be a help in this case.

The old campsite is in reasonable condition, but probably should not be reopened because the areas above and below the site are poorly drained. The site is small and limited by topography (relative to its distance from the road) and probably encourages illegal camping.

Trail - Slight increase in foot use possible.

Campsites - Little suitable topography for additions.

TRAIL 307

JEEP ROAD FROM LAUREL CREEK ROAD TO SCHOOLHOUSE GAP

This road is used primarily by day hikers and horse parties. It is well surfaced and in excellent condition. A small amount of bank erosion is present, but this is unrelated to the amount of traffic carried. Two large disturbed areas are present along the road, both of which are manmade. These should be allowed to recover.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Possible to add one, but should be very carefully placed to avoid special protection areas. May be too close to the road.

TRAIL 308

FODDERSTACK TRAIL - TREMONT TO BOTE MOUNTAIN ROAD

This trail offers few attractions other than the campsite on the West Prong, and although the trail is short enough for day hikes, most of the traffic is probably backpackers. The trail is designated as a bridle trail, but no horse sign was encountered at the time the survey was conducted.

The trail has some minor surface erosion, resulting in exposed roots and some minor rutting, but a small increase in use is still possible.

Campsite 18 receives regular use, and its location on a river flat has encouraged some spreading of the site. An illegal site on the opposite side of the river seems to be used nearly as heavily as the maintained site.

The trail is beginning to show signs of wear, but could probably still take a small increase in foot traffic.

The campsite, although not heavily used, is spreading, and unless some means of containing it can be found, increased use is not desirable.

Trail - Small increase in foot use (day hikes).

Campsites - Stabilize use.

TRAIL 310

SUGAR COVE PRONG TRAIL

This trail provides one of several possible routes between the Laurel Creek Road and the Bote Mountain Road. The trail has little in the way of scenic attractions, and appears to get only light use. It is a designated horse trail, but no horse sign was encountered.

Much of the original cut has been filled with vegetation and leaf litter, leaving a tread which averages less than 40 centimeters in width. The surface is smooth and has only minor amounts of surface erosion and exposed roots.

There are no maintained campsites on the trail, and only one infrequently used illegal site was encountered.

The trail could sustain a substantial increase in traffic, but stimulating use is doubtful due to the presence of other trails which access the same area. The status of this trail should be reviewed to determine if the cost of continued maintenance is worthwhile.

Trail - Increase use or abandon.

Campsites - Possible, but too close to the road.

TRAILS 311, 312, 313, AND 314

BOTE MOUNTAIN ROAD

The Bote Mountain Road is a recently-restricted jeep trail and all of it, except the upper 1.5 miles is surfaced with gravel. It provides access to the Appalachian Trail and the bald at Spence Field, making it a popular trail with backpackers, day hikers, and horse parties. The trail has been intensively maintained in the past to keep it open as a jeep road, but despite this, heavy use--particularly by horse parties--is damaging the surface in places. Side erosion is moderate-to-heavy throughout the trail. Mud and exposed rocks only become a problem on the upper, unpaved section of the trail. The trail is, for the most part, as wide as the cut and needs time to recover from vehicle use and road grading practices which destroy the buffer zone vegetation and accentuate problems with side erosion. In some areas, heavy horse traffic is preventing the recovery of buffer zone vegetation.

With the exception of some heavily horse plowed areas and the upper unpaved section, the trail is at carrying capacity. Once the trail has had a few years to recover from vehicle use and the buffer zone has recovered, an increase in foot use should be possible. Horse traffic

is already causing noticeable damage to the trail surface in some areas and should not be increased. With increased maintenance, the upper eroded section of the trail could be improved and stabilized.

There are no campsites along the trail.

Trail - No increase, at least for the next few years. Monitor horse damage.

Campsites - There is presently no camping along the trail but, as the trail already gets heavy use, establishment of campsites is not a good idea.

TRAIL 315

ANTHONY CREEK ROAD -

PICNIC AREA TO RUSSELL FIELD TRAIL

This trail is heavily used by backpackers, horse campers, and day hikers. Although it runs along a well-paved abandoned jeep road, heavy impact has caused deterioration of the surface in places. The popularity of the trail with back-packers stems from the fact that it is a major route between Cades Cove and the Appalachian Trail. Horse parties are attracted by the large horse camp on the trail and grazing on the two balds which this trail accesses. The balds are also a popular day hike.

The principle source of trail deterioration is overuse by horses. Large portions of the surface have been churned up by horse hooves, which has accelerated loss of soil and exposure of rocks to water action. Exposed rocks are particularly bad on the steeper grades. The trail has minor amounts of mud and bank erosion.

The horse camp is large and overused. Vegetation damage due to camping and trampling by horses is extensive. The large number of firepits and tent spaces indicates that the site often

TRAIL 316

RUSSELL FIELD TRAIL

The trail gets much use from day hikers, backpackers, and horse parties. Despite intensive maintenance, it exceeds its carrying capacity. The trail provides one of the major access routes for backpackers from Cades Cove to the Appalachian Trail, and the bald is a popular goal with day hikers. Much of the trail surface is widened and eroded. Horse damage is particularly prominent, with much of the surface being churned up by horse hooves. Most of the surface is as wide or wider than the original cut. There is no buffer zone vegetation, and vegetation on the banks and sides of the trail is being disturbed by trampling and erosion.

The trail has exceeded its carrying capacity, with damage due to overuse by horses being the most evident problem. A reduction in horse traffic is advisable, but with the heavy hiker load, it is questionable whether this alone will be adequate to allow recovery. Intensified maintenance is not likely to be effective.

There is one campsite on the trail which seems to get fairly heavy usage, but the steep hillsides and thick stands of

rhododendron which surround the site have prevented it from expanding. Within the confines of the site there is no vegetation and the soil is compacted, but vegation damage around the site is only moderate. There is no evidence of illegal camping along the trail.

Trail - Decrease horse use. Decrease in foot use may also be desirable.

Campsites - Maintain at present level.

TRAIL 317

ANTHONY CREEK BRIDLE TRAIL

This trail provides a popular route to the Appalachian Trail and Spence Field and gets regular use from backpackers, hikers, and horse parties. Day hikers are attracted by views from Spence Field, and horse parties use the trail due to its accessibility from the horse concession at Cades Cove.

This short section of trail, less than 3.2 kilometers in length, has a total of 66 water bars. These have, no doubt, had a beneficial effect in channeling water off the trail, but despite this intensive maintenance, surface erosion is prevalent. Extensive areas of exposed stones make for a poor walking surface in some areas, and much of the trail is as wide as the cut.

Campsite 9 has exceeded its carrying capacity and is spreading out across the forest floor. There are nine active fire pits, indicating that the site is often occupied by large numbers. A regularly used illegal site is located a short distance up the trail. It is well established that hikers coming down the trail might mistake it for a legal site.

Both the trail and the campsite have exceeded their carrying capacities. Intensive maintenance has not been effective in

stabilizing the trail surface, and loss of buffer zone vegetation and topsoil are continuing. It might be possible to encourage backpackers to use routes to the Appalachian Trail and Spence Field which are less popular with day hikers (such as the Bote Mountain Road). Restriction of horse traffic would also be effective in preventing further damage.

Trail - Decrease in use (both horse and foot) is desirable.

Campsites - Restrict large group use at Campsite 9. Discourage use of illegal site above Campsite 9.

TRAIL 318

GREGORY RIDGE TRAIL - PARSONS BRANCH TO MOORE SPRINGS

This trail is used by backpackers as an access to Campsites 12 and 13 and the Appalachian Trail shelters. The trail is used commonly by day hikers as a route to Gregory Bald, particularly when the azaleas are in bloom.

The trail is nearing the upper limit of its carrying capacity, with some portions having widened beyond the limits of the original cut. Exposed roots and rocks are a nuisance in some spots and there are a few muddy areas, but these have not reached serious levels. The trail is in borderline condition, and increased maintenance will be necessary to prevent it from deteriorating to below carrying capacity in the near future. Numerous water bars have helped to preserve the trail's surface, but more could still be used.

There are no campsites along the trail.

Trail - Increased maintenance would help to preserve trail in present condition; do not increase traffic under any circumstances.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAILS 19 AND 320

EKANEETLEE TRAIL

This manway is maintained by the park between the Gregory Ridge Trail and Campsite 12 (.4 mile), and this is as much of the trail as is shown on the park's backcountry camping maps. The trail continues on beyond the campsite and comes out on the Appalachian Trail at Ekaneetlee Gap. The trail is used largely by backpackers and the lower section, between Gregory Ridge and the campsite, carries a moderate amount of traffic. Only the more adventurous backpackers and those who are familiar with the trail continue on beyond the campsite.

The lower section of the trail is muddy and has many exposed roots. It repeatedly crosses Ekaneetlee Creek and, at one point, runs up the creek bed for a short distance before emerging on the other side. This section is probably at its proper carrying capacity. Above Campsite 12, the trail runs through a massive windfall. The trees have been cut through, but hikers have rerouted the trail around some of the worst areas. The trail is not properly graded or cut, making walking difficult in places, and the route of the trail is often difficult to follow.

Campsite 12 gets continuous use and is often full to capacity in season, but the site is well contained on a small flat and the area immediately surrounding the site is showing much impact. The site can continue to support present usage levels without further deterioration. A regularly used illegal site is located a short distance up the trail. The regular usage probably results, at least in part, from the crowded conditions which often exist at Ekaneetlee.

The trail is lightly used and is presently in fair condition. Since it is not properly graded or cut, it will not withstand increased impact.

Trail - No change.

Campsites - Decreased use.

TRAIL 321

HANNAH MOUNTAIN TRAIL - SAMS GAP TO SHEEP PEN GAP

This trail is heavily used by back packers, day hikers, and horses. It provides access to the Wolfe Ridge Trail and the campsite at Sheep Pen Gap. Until the recent closure of the shelter at Moore Springs, the trail provided a common route for backpackers to the shelter. The trail is the shortest route to Gregory Bald, a popular day hike, particularly when the azaleas bloom in mid-June.

The trail is nearing the upper limit of its carrying capacity, with small to moderate amounts of horse plow, bare rock, exposed roots, and side erosion present throughout its length. The upper mile of the trail is excessively muddy and rocky and the surface has deteriorated and widened. Intensified maintenance on this section would be worthwhile and could probably help restore the surface.

The campsite at Sheep Pen Gap gets continuous heavy use and often supports large numbers of campers. The site is commonly used by backpackers as a starting point for trips on the Appalachian Trail. In the past it has been used to absorb overflow from the Moore Spring shelter. The site exceeded

its carrying capacity long ago. Mud and bare soil are extensive, and damage to the sensitive mesic understory herbs is extremely high. The site has spread across the forest floor to the point where it presently occupies 30,000 square meters.

The closure of the Moore Springs Shelter is going to put additional camping pressure on the area which Sheep Pen Gap will be unable to absorb.

Use of this site must be limited to prevent further damage and expansion. The area presently has six separate camping spots and a total of 19 active fire pits. These large expanses of bare soil and associated trash have a large visual impact. Use should be restricted to one site and 12 campers (the capacity of a shelter), and the other five should be allowed to recover. This will result in a reduction in the capacity of the site and will require signs indicating the proper camping area and patrol to discourage illegal camping.

Trail - Increase maintenance on the upper section. No increase in use is recommended.

Campsites - Limit capacity of Sheep Pen Gap to 12 and restrict use to one site. Patrol will be necessary.

TRAIL 323

SHEEP PEN GAP TO DOE KNOB

This section of trail runs along the ridge top on the North Carolina - Tennessee border and was part of the Appalachian Trail prior to the rerouting of the Appalachian Trail over Fontana Dam. It is still a major thoroughfare and link with the Appalachian Trail and is used primarily by backpackers and horse campers. In the past the shelter at Moore Spring contributed substantially to the trail's popularity with backpackers. Gregory Bald, located at the eastern end of the trail, is a popular day-hiker goal. Attractions include views, berry picking, and spectacular azalea displays.

The condition of the trail varies substantially over its length. Some sections are suffering from problems with water erosion and have a rough wide walking surface, while other sections are in relatively good shape and could absorb more impact from hikers. The eastern half of the trail is, generally, in better condition than the western half.

Since the closure of the Moore Spring shelter, there are no legal camping facilities on this trail, but there is much evidence of illegal camping around the shelter.

The recent closure of the shelter at Moore Spring will probably result in a reduction in backpacker traffic coming from the Appalachian Trail. This will be good for the trail, much of which is above carrying capacity. At the same time, the burden on Campsite 13 at Sheep Pen Gap, which is already heavily used, can be expected to increase substantially. Sheep Pen Gap will not be able to absorb the impact of increased use, and space will have to be carefully rationed or an additional site in the vicinity of Moore Spring will have to be established. The shelter site may not make a suitable tent camping area. It will be necessary to monitor the demand for camping in the area and to make plans accordingly.

Trail - No change.

Campsites - Use of Sheep Pen Gap is likely to increase. The impact will have to be monitored and space rationed accordingly. The need for a new site in the vicinity of Moore Spring should be studied. Establishment of a site here would help reduce illegal camping.

TRAIL 325

GREGORY CAVE ROAD

This surfaced road is gated, but still open to authorized motor vehicles. It leads to a large group function area and Gregory Cave. The trail head is not marked. This probably cuts down on use by those who are curious to see the cave or have a family picnic. The trail probably only gets sporadic heavy use when the picnic area is active. At other times use is probably light. The surface is in good shape but rather wide in places. It is near its proper carrying capacity.

Trail - Carrying capacity.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 326

CADES COVE VISTA NATURE TRAIL

This is a short, but fairly steep, walk which offers a good vista of Cades Cove. Like most of the park's short nature loops, this trail is heavily used and suffering from problems with widening and surface erosion. With increased visitation to the park, it is these short loops, which are suitable for family groups and those who are unable to hike the park's backcountry, which will bear the brunt of the increased impact.

Despite intensive maintenance, the trail is deteriorating due to overuse and because there is no practical way to reduce traffic short of closing the trail. The best policy will probably be to surface the trail.

Trail - Surface.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 327

PINE OAK NATURE TRAIL - CADES COVE

This short loop is popular with the tourists who drive through Cades Cove and who want a short walk in the woods. The one-third mile trail is easily completed by even the weakest hikers, which makes it accessible to family groups with small children and elderly persons.

The trail runs through tough pine-oak forest types and, despite extremely heavy use, has held up reasonably well. The trail has widened past 120 centimeters, and vegetation has been trampled where people have wandered off the trail around the numbered attractions. However, the walking surface is, for the most part, intact and relatively smooth. Surfacing the trail with gravel or in some other way delineating the trail's boundaries would help limit the widening problem. Logs laid strategically across areas where people wander off the trail would help prevent damage to vegetation in these areas.

Trail - Increase maintenance to prevent widening and damage to vegetation around sign posts.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 328

FOOT TRAIL FROM CADES COVE LOOP ROAD TO

RICH MOUNTAIN BRIDLE PATH (WEST OF FIELD)

This trail is used infrequently by families, day hikers, and people driving through the cove and wanting to stretch a bit before continuing driving.

The trail is becoming overgrown through lack of use and is probably best abandoned.

Trail - Abandon.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 329

CADES COVE BRIDLE PATH

This trail is used almost exclusively by concessioners' horses, and foot use is prohibited. It is surfaced in gravel and well maintained. The central portion of the trail is badly horse plowed, but strips of undisturbed gravel remain on either side of the tread and act as a buffer zone to minimize vegetation disturbance and bank erosion. The loose soil in the tread becomes mud in wet weather. The spur trail to the Anthony Creek Trail is not paved and is suffering from surface erosion and much mud. This short section must be paved if it is to be stabilized without a sizeable reduction in traffic.

Trail - Continuing the present policy of intensive maintenance attention being given to keep the surface well graveled will be necessary if the trail is to continue to absorb heavy horse impact without deteriorating. The spur trail to Anthony Creek should probably be paved.

Campsites - None.

MANWAY, GREGORY CAVE PICNIC AREA TO CADES COVE LOOP ROAD

This short piece of trail is very little used and is becoming overgrown from lack of use. The road to Gregory Cave provides easier access to the picnic area, and the trail is probably best off being abandoned.

Trail - Abandon.

Campsites - None.

SECTION 4 - TREMONT

TRAIL 401

MEIGS CREEK TRAIL - THE SINKS TO BUCKHORN GAP

This trail is moderately used by day hikers and backpackers and the entire length is in good condition. Walking is unobstructed except by the numerous stream crossings. The trail is generally wide (>1 meter) and shallow and travels through a stand of virgin forest with some very large hemlocks and at least two large beech trees, along with others.

No fire sign was seen on the trail to indicate camping, but one probable illegal site is located about 1 mile from the Sinks. The area around the Sinks receives considerable day use, and small trails and clearings may indicate some camping. No illegal sites were found here, however.

Trail - Increase day hiker use; should really be very attractive to people interested in short day trips.

Campsites - Adding a site is possible, but the virgin area should be avoided.

Note: This trail has unrealized potential for day hiking and easy access. A cut-across trail to Metcalf Bottoms would allow day hikers to loop over Meigs Mountain and return without parking problems.

TRAIL 402

METCALF BOTTOMS TO MEIGS MOUNTAIN

This trail gets very light use, probably by both backpackers and day hikers. The trail runs along an old abandoned road which probably predates the park and which probably was never used as a park jeep road. The trail surface is in excellent condition, and a large increase in traffic is possible. There is virtually no compacted soil along the trail, and grasses, mosses, and delicate herbs abound on the cut. Much of the trail is completely covered in vegetation.

The only campsite was an illegal emergency site in the middle of the trail which was probably used only once. No legal sites need be established along this trail, as Campsite 19 is located at the end of the trail.

The jeep width of the trail would make it excellent for day hikers who like to walk two abreast. A 10-mile day hike is possible using this trail and then heading west on the Meigs Mountain Trail and back down to Little River on the Meigs Creek Trail.

Trail - Increase foot use, especially day hikers.

Campsites - None needed.

Trail - Increase hiker use.

Campsites - Generally too steep.

TRAIL 403

LUMBER RIDGE TRAIL

This trail is used moderately by day hikers and occasionally by backpackers and could sustain a heavy increase in traffic. The trail width is often less than 1.0 meter until a mile or so out of Tremont (Camp Townsend), where it becomes 1.0 to 1.5 meters wide and more soil than litter. Before this transition, there is little bare soil in the trail. Water erosion is light and evidence of mud is essentially nonexistent. Side erosion is the only class of erosion applicable in significant amounts and is low except at a few locations near Tremont.

There was sign of one illegal campsite at Upper Buckhorn Gap.

There are several fine views, partly aided by leaf fall and partly by openings in sections of pine and heath. These take in the Middle Prong watershed up to Thunderhead Mountain and around to Rich Mountain. Dropping down farther, one gets good views of Fodderstack Mountain over Camp Townsend.

This trail could withstand more hiker use, especially by day hikers. The trail head is difficult to locate, however. More signs and a special hiker parking area at Tremont would help.

TRAIL 404

SPRUCE FLATS TRAIL - BUCKHORN GAP TO SPRUCE FLATS

This trail is lightly used by hikers. From Buckhorn Gap it is narrow and drops down the slope rather steeply (but with little erosion). The trail, after 200 meters, follows an old roadbed which was graveled for most of its length at one time. The trail is sometimes narrow due to vegetation overgrowing the roadbed; maximum width is about 2.5 meters where the old road width remains. The trail can sustain increased use. Bad spots are at stream crossings where bridges are gone.

A campsite was found near the Middle Prong of the Little River about one-half mile above Spruce Flats. A few old roads were noted branching off of this old road (three); none are signed. With Tremont Road closed, addition of a campsite near the base of the mountain is possible.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Addition of campsites might be contemplated, depending on the status of Tremont Road.

TRAILS 405 and 406

MEIGS MOUNTAIN TRAIL - ELKMONT TO LUMBER RIDGE TRAIL

This trail receives moderate day hiker and backpacker use. It is in fair to good condition. Total widths usually run somewhat over 1.0 meters, but the tread is of a reasonable width--less than 1.0 meter. Slopes are often close to 0 degrees because the trail follows contours around ridge lines.

The forest is all second growth from lumbering and farming.

Campsites 19 and 20 provide ample opportunity for overnighters in this area, although one illegal site was found near Campsite 19. Both legal sites are slowly spreading. Campsite 19 slopes, perhaps too much, so offers little room for a tent on level ground. Campers scheduled to stop here may move on a little farther to find more level sites.

Water crosses the trail fairly often in small streams, and control of surface water erosion is the most important trail maintenance problem.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - Stabilize use.

TRAIL 407

TREMONT ROAD

Tremont Road has been open to vehicle use but is now closed at the upper end. The road is in good condition and can withstand heavy use by horses and foot travelers.

Closure of the road increases the availability of potential backcountry sites in the area.

Trail - Encourage use.

Campsites - Additions possible.

TRAIL 408

LYNN CAMP PRONG TRAIL - TREMONT TO APPALACHIAN TRAIL

The trail is used by backpackers and horse riders as an access to the Appalachian Trail. The first 4 miles are gravel surfaced, are in excellent condition, and can tolerate a substantial increase in both foot and horse traffic. One-half mile below the Mark Cove Trail cutoff, the path deteriorates to an old logging road, with eroded areas, especially on the switchbacks.

The sole illegal campsite is small, well-placed, and could be developed if additional campsites are needed in the area.

Trail - Increased foot and horse traffic on lower sections. Slight increase on upper section with improved maintenance.

Campsites - Addition possible if far enough away from Derrick and on a low-enough slope. With closure of Tremont Road, addition very possible at base.

TRAIL 409

TREMONT ROAD TO JAKES GAP

This trail is moderately used by day hikers and backpackers. It is in fair condition. There are some problems with water erosion (none severe).

The trail can probably withstand its present usage, especially with good maintenance. Campsite placement depends on the management of Tremont Road and the rest of the area. It would be possible to add a small site.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - Addition possible; depends on management of the watershed.

TRAIL 410

MARK COVE TRAIL -

LYNN CAMP PRONG TRAIL TO MEIG RIDGE TRAIL

The trail is used by backpackers and horse riders as a possible route between the Appalachian Trail and Elkmont.

Mud, due to numerous seeps and streams, is more often a problem than surface erosion. The first 1.5 miles runs on an old logging road, and the next 2 miles, which contain most of the muddy patches, is a cut and maintained bridle path.

Campsite 28, the only campsite, is small (one firepit) and should be maintained as such.

Trail - At carrying capacity with increased maintenance.

Campsites - Stabilize use.

TRAILS 411 and 412

MIRY RIDGE TRAIL - BUCKEYE GAP TO JAKES GAP

This trail is the major route between the Appalachian Trail and Elkmont and contains two primitive campsites. Consequently, the major portion of the traffic is backpackers and occasional horse campers. There are no notable attractions on the trail. It is rarely used by day hikers.

The walking surface of the trail is narrow, mostly under 70 centimeters, and the vegetation along the sides is little disturbed. There are a few small muddy areas, hog wallows, and rocky spots but, for the most part, the surface is smooth and shows little evidence of water action. The trail could tolerate a moderate increase in foot and horse traffic before reaching its carrying capacity.

Campsite 26 gets moderate to heavy usage, is well placed, and is probably at its proper carrying capacity. The site has a poor water supply. Illegal camping is not common along the trail. Only one little-used illegal site was located.

Trail - An increase in both horse and foot traffic is possible (mostly day use), but a small amount of maintenance is needed along the first quarter of a mile above Jakes Gap and the first quarter of a mile below Buckeye Gap.

Campsites - No new sites are needed; stabilize use.

TRAIL 413

BLANKET MOUNTAIN TRAIL

The Blanket Mountain Trail is a short (less than one mile) dead-end trail which starts at Jakes Gap and ends on the small bald on Blanket Mountain, which once had a fire tower. The trail is used by day hikers who have the bald as their day's objective and by backpackers as a short side trip.

The trail runs on the bed of an old jeep trail, but vegetation has grown in on the sides, making the walking surface of foot-trail width. The trail is at carrying capacity throughout, being narrow and relatively smooth but with some rocky sections.

There is evidence of a moderate amount of illegal camping on top, but there is little vegetation damage due to the tough nature of the grasses and sedges which populate the site. This area would make a fine legal site, particularly for large group camping, as the vegetation can withstand much impact without being damaged. The site has no water.

Trail - Maintain at present level.

Campsites - Potential for legal site on top, but no water; too close to other sites.

TRAIL 414

JAKES CREEK TRAIL - ELKMONT TO JAKES GAP

This trail gets fairly heavy usage from backpackers and day hikers and is used occasionally by horse parties as well. It is a major link between Elkmont and the Appalachian Trail and provides the only access to primitive Campsites 26, 27, and 28 from Elkmont. The trail to Blanket Mountain, a popular day hike, is also reached by this trail.

The lower half of the trail is on a recently-abandoned surfaced jeep road which is in excellent shape and could stand a heavy increase in both horse and foot traffic. Above Newt Prong (about 1.5 miles up) it changes to a foot trail and its condition deteriorates. Much of the trail has problems with seeps and small tributaries from Jakes Creek running in the trail cut and washing away the soil, leaving a surface of loose stones. Exposed tree roots and bank erosion are also prevalent. Overall, the upper part of the trail is above carrying capacity, and a decrease in use would be desirable. Increased maintenance (water bars and culverts) would probably be effective at helping to restore the surface in some of the water-eroded stretches.

Campsite 27 at Jakes Gap gets a moderate to heavy amount of use

and, judging from the number of firepits, often supports large number of people. It is presently at the upper limit of its carrying capacity and use should be limited to four or five groups a night to prevent further expansion of the site.

There are several illegal sites along the trail and use of these should be discouraged, as some are very poorly located in respect to drainage, sanitation, and sensitive vegetation. Better patrol is necessary.

Trail - A drainage system on the upper portion of the trail might help restore the surface; otherwise, a decrease in use is desirable, even though the lower half of the trail could withstand considerable impact.

Campsites - Stabilize or decrease use.

SECTION 5 - ELKMONT

TRAIL 502

PARKING AREA TO LAUREL FALLS

This trail is one of the most heavily used in the park. The traffic is almost entirely day hikers. The trail is paved but still shows evidence of bank erosion, due to people walking two and three abreast and guffer rerouting. The trail has some vista clearings and developments.

The area around the falls is laced with manways and shows a fair amount of human impact and erosion damage. It is unlikely that people can be kept off the rocks, although the area above the falls is fairly well impacted.

The trail is near the road and so popular with day hikers that adding campsites or allowing zone-type camping would probably result in further overuse and vandalism. Most backpackers probably would not like the paved surface or the number of visitors concentrated in the area. Camping should probably be prohibited up to the intersection with the boundary trail.

Trail - Intensive maintenance.

Campsites - No sites should be established.

TRAILS 506, 507, AND 508

SUGARLANDS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

This trail is used by backpackers and day hikers alike. It provides access to the Appalachian Trail and several other trails and provides a popular route to Chimney Tops. The Mount Collins shelter and Campsite 21 are located on this trail.

For the most part, the trail is in good condition, at and below carrying capacity, and could withstand an increase in foot traffic. An exception to this is the short section between the Appalachian Trail and Mount Collins shelter, which is severely eroded due to excessive use by backpackers hiking the Appalachian Trail who stop at the shelter. The trail improves remarkably below the shelter. The surface is smooth and narrow (mostly under 70 centimeters) and, for the most part, is lined with herbaceous vegetation.

The Mount Collins shelter gets heavy continuous use throughout the season. Bare soil and trampled vegetation are of moderate extent but probably are not expanding. Tree damage due to firewood gathering is extensive and stumps are numerous. Nothing short of a ban on fires is likely to prevent further damage.

Campsite 21 gets moderate usage and is at or over carrying capacity. Expansion of the site is limited by its location on

a "bench" with steep slopes on all sides. The site is located up slope from its water supply, and a small stream runs through the site and feeds the spring, creating a good possibility of water pollution.

Another campsite located near the intersection with the Rough Creek Trail might help stimulate more use of the trail. There is a good potential area on a knoll just west of the intersection. No water is available at the site.

Trail - An increase in foot use is possible and might be stimulated by adding a campsite near the intersection with the Rough Creek Trail. Between the Appalachian Trail and Mount Collins shelters the trail needs intensive maintenance or, better yet, should be rerouted around the shelter.

Campsites - Another site should be established halfway along the trail, particularly if increased use of the trail is anticipated.

TRAIL 510

MIDS CREEK NATURE TRAIL

Like most of the park's short nature trails, this trail is popular with those visitors who want to get into the woods but do not feel confident enough in their hiking ability to hike the backcountry trails. The trail is probably used primarily by campers at Elkmont. The lower portion of the trail is muddy, and exposed rocks and roots are in evidence throughout the trail. The walking surface is mostly more than one meter wide. With more maintenance, the trail will be able to continue with its present hiker load.

Trail - Because there is no feasible way to decrease traffic short of closing the trail altogether, increased maintenance will be necessary to prevent further deterioration.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 511

MIDS BRANCH TRAIL

This trail is unmarked and is overgrown to the point where it is difficult to find the lead. Passage is difficult and the path is hard to follow.

Trail - Abandon.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 512

HUSKEY GAP TRAIL -

LITTLE RIVER TRAIL TO HUSKEY GAP

This trail gets a moderate amount of use from backpackers and day hikers. It can be used as an access to the Sugarlands Mountain trail and as part of several day hikes. The trail is running slightly below carrying capacity, and an increase in foot use is possible. The closure of the Little River Road along Middle Prong above Elkmont will probably work to decrease use somewhat.

There are no legal campsites along the trail, and the frequency of illegal camping is very low.

Trail - Slight increase in day hiking.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 513

ROUGH CREEK TRAIL

The trail is probably used primarily by backpackers as an access route to Campsite 24 from the Sugarlands Mountain Trail. The trail may get some day hiker use, but the 14-mile round trip is a little long for most people and there are no attractions on the trail. The trail probably got more day hiker use prior to the closing of the Elkmont (Middle Prong) Jeep Road.

The trail is in good condition, averaging under 80 centimeters in width and with no serious erosion problems. A moderate increase in foot traffic is possible.

There are no campsites on the trail and none are needed, although a site on the Sugarlands Trail near the intersection with this trail would be useful, and might increase the use of the trail.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Site near junction with Sugarlands Mountain Trail would help stimulate use.

TRAIL 514

SUGARLANDS BRANCH ROAD -

NEWFOUND GAP ROAD TO HUSKEY GAP

This is a maintained gravel road up to a service area and junk yard about one-half mile from the highway. Above the service area the trail follows an old unmaintained road with ruts and rocks. It is well overgrown. Rerouting would be necessary if the trail were to be maintained. There is illegal camping near the top.

Trail - No change unless a loop from Huskey Gap is contemplated; then rerouting is necessary.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 515

HUSKEY GAP TRAIL -

NEWFOUND GAP ROAD TO HUSKEY GAP

This trail is well used by day hikers and backpackers. It is in fair to good condition. Conditions are poorer near the highway, and there are small ruts and exposed roots. The lower end is at carrying capacity unless maintenance is intensified.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 516

CUCUMBER GAP TRAIL

This trail is probably used primarily by day hikers making a round trip from Elkmont. Backpackers traveling between backcountry campsites also use the trail.

The trail has some small problems with water erosion around stream crossings, but otherwise it is in good shape. If these areas were maintained, the trail could tolerate a moderate increase in foot use.

There is no legal camping along the trail, and illegal camping is infrequent. No new sites are needed in the area.

Trail - No change.

Campsites - None.

TRAILS 517 AND 518

GOSHEN PRONG TRAIL

This trail is used by day hikers, backpackers, and fishermen. The impact from campers is reasonably heavy. Use has changed due to road closures above Elkmont.

The end of the trail near the Appalachian Trail is in poor condition. The soil surface is largely worn away and there are exposed rocks and tree roots present throughout. There are mudholes, reroutes, and some water-eroded sections. As the trail drops out of spruce-fir into the cutover areas, conditions improve somewhat. There are still eroded sections, but the surface is less effected by water action and the trail is narrower. There are fewer mudholes. As the trail drops on to the flats beside the stream in the valley, conditions improve further and the trail is generally narrow and in good condition. It should be noted that the lower section has probably received more use than the upper, and the erosion pattern here is more closely related to forest type and slope than it is to total visitor use.

Illegal camping is common on the stream flats, many of which have delicate understories rich in wild flowers. A number of the areas are well worn and probably heavily used, some of

the stream fords may be difficult to cross at high water, which probably encourages the problem further.

The lower end of the trail could tolerate an increase in foot use, but the upper end would only be further damaged. Traffic from the Appalachian Trail should probably be reduced. The limit on use at the lower end is the number of campsites which can absorb the heavy use. Illegal camping may decline somewhat due to closure of the road from Elkmont, but the area probably still needs more careful patrol, a general cleanup several times a year for illegal sites, and relocation of some present camps. Temporarily, stabilizing backpacker use may be best. Day hiking at the lower end can be encouraged.

Trail - Stabilize backpackers; encourage day hiking from Elkmont.

Campsites - Review camping patterns; clean up, patrol, and possibly move sites.

TRAIL 519

FISH CAMP PRONG TRAIL

This trail is lightly traveled by backpackers and fishermen. It is on an old logging railroad bed. The lower end is maintained; the upper end is a manway.

The lower end of the trail is in good condition, but the walking surface is uneven due to the corduroyed surface of the logging road. Camping in the area is moderate. The upper end of the trail, although not maintained, is used occasionally and is on too steep a slope for heavy traffic.

The lower end of the trail could tolerate more use. Since it dead ends at the campsite, most backpackers are not likely to chose this route. There is a large illegal campsite at the intersection of the trail with Goshen Prong Trail, and many hikers probably stop there, especially at high water. Trying to increase hiker use probably would not damage the trail, but might encourage illegal camping and vegetation damage. Unless the whole trail were opened and maintained, retaining use at the present level seems best.

Trail -- No change.

Campsites - Present system.

TRAILS 520 AND 521

LITTLE RIVER TRAIL - ELKMONT TO CAMPSITE 30

The lower 3 miles of this trail were open to vehicle traffic until very recently, and the signs of vehicle use are still evident.

The trail gets moderate to heavy use from day hikers, backpackers, and fishermen. It intersects and provides access to four other trails and several campsites. Fishing in the Little River makes the trail popular with fishermen.

The trail is wide and well surfaced and could stand considerable impact from both horse and foot traffic. In time, the surface should narrow as it recovers from vehicle use and vegetation encroaches from the side.

Above Rough Creek there are three spots where the road has washed out due to flood water; there are also three old collapsed bridges. The collapsed bridges present a hazard to hikers, who may try to cross on the remains of these bridges, which should be demolished or rebuilt. The fords at these bridges are difficult and would be impossible to cross at high water. If the washouts and bridges are repaired, the entire trail could be recommended for a heavy increase in both horse and foot traffic.

The trail dead-ends at Campsite 30 (except for a very steep and hazardous manway which climbs to Clingmans Dome and which should not be maintained). In the past, Campsite 30 has had a moderate amount of usage, but its location in a successional area dominated by tough grasses and sedges has resulted in very little vegetation damage. The site could take an increase in use, but demand has probably decreased since the closing of the road above Elkmont. The level of illegal camping along the trail is extremely high. Many of the sites probably serve primarily as fishing camps; others are probably the result of overflow from the Elkmont campground. Many of these are poorly located, being too close to the river and in areas which flood periodically. Increased patrol in this area would help keep illegal camping down to a minimum.

Trail - Increased use (both horse and foot) is possible between the gate and Rough Creek. Above Rough Creek the trail should either be converted to manway status or collapsed bridges should be replaced. The old bridge sites are dangerous fords.

Campsites - Camping at Rough Creek is likely to decrease due to the closing of the access road. Camping here should be limited to four or five parties a

night and a new site should be established in a less sensitive area if demand remains high. Patrol is needed to discourage illegal camping along Little River.

TRAIL 522

MANWAY, CHIMNEY TOPS TO SUGARLANDS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

This manway is used by day hikers and occasional backpackers traveling to Chimney Tops from the Sugarlands Mountain Trail. This route is a popular alternative to the Chimney Tops Trail. It is severely eroded over nearly its entire length. In one spot a slide has obliterated a small section of the trail, making passage extremely difficult. Parts of the trail have a slope of over 20 degrees and the entire trail is altogether too steep for reasonable hiking. In some of the steeper sections, it is necessary to keep handholds on surrounding shrubbery to avoid sliding backwards on slippery mud. Over some sections of the trail it is necessary to walk on top of tangled mats of roots where the soil has been washed away. The entire trail is muddy and full of obstacles. The trail is a hazard and should probably be abandoned entirely, as there is no reasonable way to improve its condition. Construction of a new trail, along a sensible route and properly graded, is advisable.

Trail - Abandon and construct a new trail.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 523

CHIMNEY TOPS TRAIL

Spectacular views and easy access make the Chimney Tops one of the park's most popular visitor attractions. Day hikers are, by far, the most common users. The trail has been intensively maintained, but the surface is excessively wide and rough due to overuse.

The lower section has been artificially widened and surfaced in gravel to help absorb the intensive impact. Small sections of the trail are in stable condition, but between these sections there are four sections which show signs of severe trail erosion. All of these eroded areas are on particularly steep slopes (over 10 percent). One such area is over 100 meters long and has had bedrock exposed over a major portion of its length, making walking difficult. The three other trouble spots are smaller (25-75 meters long). These areas have had the topsoil washed away, leaving numerous loose rocks on the trail, and making walking both difficult and hazardous. The bad trail erosion is due, not only to excessive bank seepage, but to the steep grade and heavy usage.

The entire upper half of the trail shows evidence of severe bank erosion. The bank has been undercut in many areas, exposing tree roots and damaging the herb cover.

With the addition of drainage ditches and culverts along the four badly eroded sections, further erosion could probably be prevented. Attention given to resurfacing these washed-out areas would put the trail in good shape. Alternatively, the trail could be rerouted around these sections at a shallower inclination.

As the trail gets into the high elevation spruce-yellow birch association, mud and exposed roots and rocks become a problem in places. However, the trail seems stable and is not growing wider or losing soil.

Trail - The trail requires intensive and continuous maintenance. Continue policy of artificially widening and surfacing.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 524

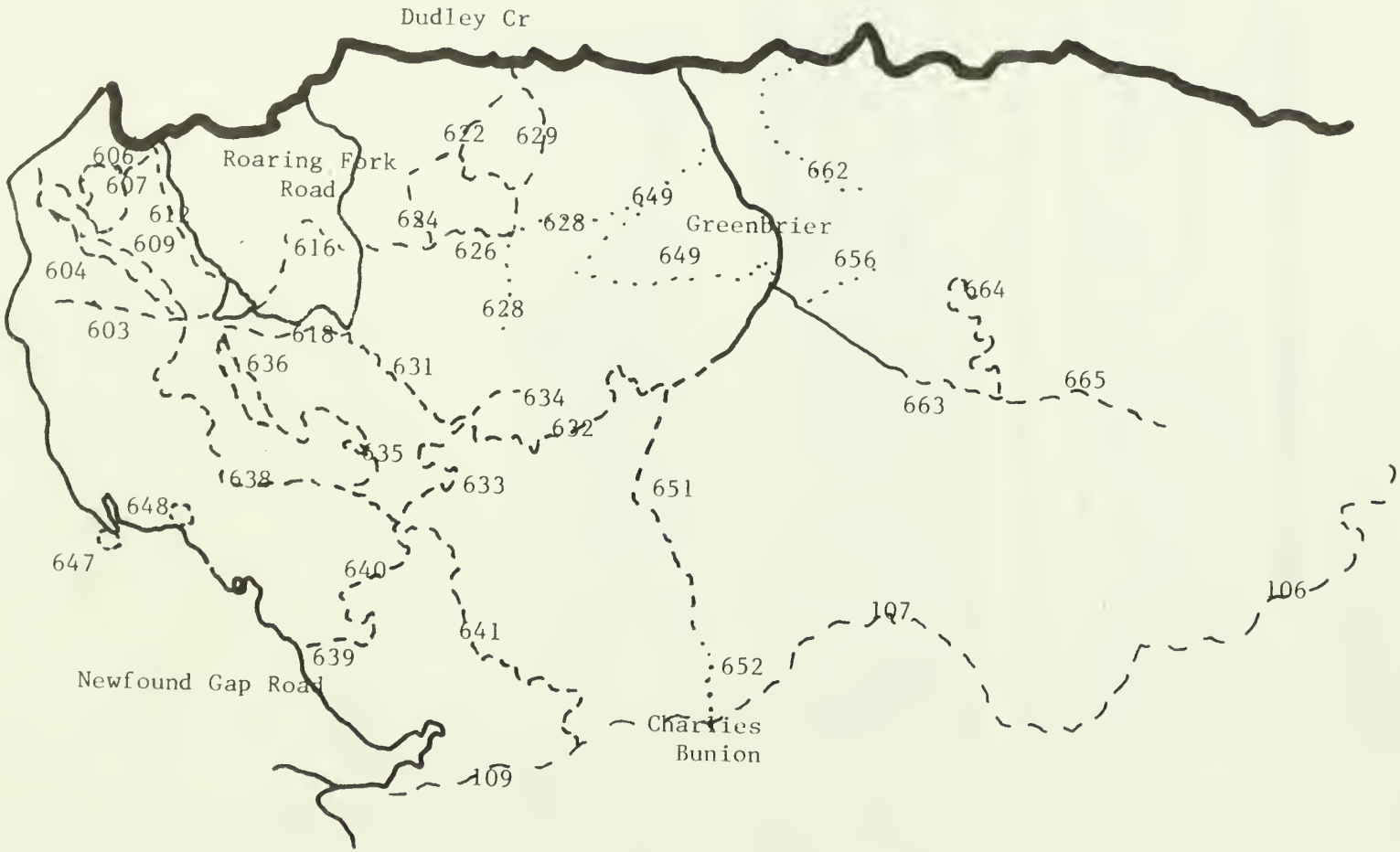
INDIAN CREEK TRAIL - OLD ROAD TO CHIMNEY TOPS

This trail is used primarily by day hikers as an alternative route to Chimney Tops just as a short day hike. The grade is moderate and there are falls about halfway up the trail. Water action and overuse have caused widening of the trail past a meter and exposure of rocks and roots over most of its length. Walking is not very difficult, but the trail definitely needs a decrease in traffic as well as an increase in maintenance if it is not to deteriorate further.

Trail - Decrease use to allow for recovery to increase maintenance.

Campsites - No additions.

SECTION 6 - LECONTE



TRAIL 601

LECONTE AREA - NEWFOUND GAP TO CAMPSITE 22 AND ENVIRONS

This area is used by backpackers, illegal campers, and people taking short walks.

The upper end of the road to Campsite 22 is surfaced and in good condition, but the lower end is rutted by vehicle tracks and tends to flood. Below Campsite 22, the road narrows to a footpath which goes to the old bridge crossing. A narrow, lightly-traveled manway continues towards Sugarlands.

Campsite 22 is very extensive and grades into illegal sites up and down stream. The illegal sites beyond the 200-foot limit are connected by manways running through the woods and along the creek.

Although Campsite 22 is for use by people without vehicles (hitchhikers, walkers, and people coming in on the bus who are starting too late in the day) one still has to either walk on the road or hitchhike to get there. It is fairly common to see backpackers walking on Newfound Gap Road between Sugarlands and Huskey Gap Trailhead. It would be desirable to put in and mark a foot trail from Sugarlands to Campsite 22 (and, therefore, also

to Huskey Gap Trail) so that it would be possible to walk to this site. A well-constructed trail might also draw some day hikers from Sugarlands. The distance would be about one-and-one-half miles. This trail would indirectly serve to connect Huskey Gap and the Elkmont area with the trails up the north-facing side of Mount LeConte.

A marked trail should also be established from the park boundary at Gatlinburg to Sugarlands. This might cut down on the number of hitchhikers and backpackers who walk on Newfound Gap Road. The sign should indicate that the trail leads to the Visitor Center and that backcountry campers can obtain permits there.

The land around Campsite 22 has a long history of human use and has been a sacrifice area since the beginning of the park. The site is heavily used, but is already disturbed. Some effort should be made to curtail the illegal camping. Much of the problem probably originates locally, so an occasional check of the area on a weekend evening would probably suffice.

Trail - Extend local manway system.

Campsites - Maintain at present level.

TRAIL 603

ROAD FROM CHEROKEE ORCHARD TO OLD SUGARLANDS UTILITY AREA

The road is only occasionally used by hikers, and by local people whose relatives once lived in Sugarlands. The road does not connect to any maintained trail or to any major attraction other than old homesites.

The road is graveled and well graded and could support heavy foot and horse traffic.

Connecting this road to Sugarlands and the Newfound Gap Road bridge over West Prong by a maintained trail would provide an alternative to the Two-Mile Lead Trail. This would enable hikers who do not want to walk in mud and horse plowed terrain to reach Mount LeConte (which does not need more traffic) or walk to Greenbrier. There is an old railroad grade running near the stream bed that would make a good location for a trail if cleared. Prohibiting horseback riding on the additional section would minimize conflicts with hikers.

Trail - Add extension and expand use.

Campsites - Possibly add a site to serve as a high impact area and starting point for a walk to Cosby.

TRAIL 604

TWO MILE LEAD TRAIL

This trail is used by concessioners' horses and occasionally by day hikers and backpackers. The trail is largely a connector between Sugarlands area and Cherokee Orchard.

The trail is muddy due to intensive horse use and, like the rest of the Two-Mile Horse Trails, tends to be about 2 meters wide. Because of the heavy horse use, this is a mediocre trail for foot travel. It probably should remain without campsites.

Trail - Heavy maintenance.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAILS 605, 606 AND 607

TWO MILE STABLES HORSE TRAILS

These trails are used largely by horses belonging to the concessioners. Since they are not marked on the maps given out at the Visitor Center, day hikers are infrequent and backpackers exceedingly rare on these routes.

GRASSY BRANCH TRAIL (LeConte Creek to Panther Creek, and Panther Creek Trail to Two-Mile Creek): The lower section of the trail has some rocks and ruts. The upper section gets more use because it is muddy.

Panther Creek Trail: The trail is very muddy and requires frequent maintenance. The surface is only fair for walking and may be poor after extensive horse use. The trail offers some good views. Other trails inlcude Two-Mile Lead Trail, a connector up to it from Two-Mile Creek, and a trail to the Cherokee Orchard--Sugarlands gravel/dirt road. These trails are horse plowed and are difficult for someone on foot.

The trails should remain almost exclusively horse trails, and any expansion of backpacker or day hiker use in the area would probably require separate trails.

Because of intensive horse use and the proximity to roads, no camping is recommended for this area.

Trail - Horses only, and intensive maintenance.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 613

LECONTE CREEK - JUNGLE BROOK TO THE PARK BOUNDARY

This trail is used largely by day hikers and people living near the park. Since it is not marked, most people not familiar with the area probably do not know about it.

The trail is in fair-to-good condition. There are a few spots which are water eroded or stony. The west fork of the trail, which runs to the old Holston Assembly Grounds, is only in fair condition due to exposed roots and water erosion.

The trail could probably absorb some of the hiker traffic from Cherokee Orchard Road and probably should be marked. It is too close to the road for camping.

Trail - Mark and allow a minor increase.

Campsites - No sites added.

TRAIL 614

JUNGLEBROOK NATURE TRAIL

This trail is heavily used by day hikers.

The trail is very worn and stony. The trail passes through a boulder field, and exposed roots pose a hazard.

This trail is difficult walking and may discourage older or partially disabled people from using this nature trail or others in the park. The flowers along the trail have been damaged by trampling, and there are numerous guffer reroutes, so some kind of gravel or surfacing might help. The condition of this area should be reviewed.

Trail - Review for remedial action.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 615

BASKINS CREEK MANWAY

This manway is used moderately, mostly by local people.

The trail is rough walking due to large rocks and old ruts. There are several fords.

The trail would need better maintenance before an increase in traffic could be recommended.

Trail - Remain unmaintained.

Campsites - None.

TRAILS 616 AND 617

HORSE TRAILS - CHEROKEE ORCHARD TO ROARING FORK AREA

These trails are used almost exclusively by horses.

The trail from Trillium Gap parking area down Roaring Fork is fair to poor. The trail is very muddy and has one guffer reroute.

The trail from Cherokee Orchard to Roaring Fork is variable. It starts in good condition on a gravel road from the motor nature trail to a cemetery. The bottom of upper Baskins Creek is deep mud and needs increased maintenance. A few sections of the trail are steep (10 degrees) and increase the possibility of water erosion.

Neither of these trails is suitable for hiker use and both should be intensively maintained.

Trail - Intensive maintenance.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 618

HORSE TRAIL - CHEROKEE ORCHARD TO BASE OF TRILLIUM GAP TRAIL

This trail is used largely by horse parties.

The trail is muddy and difficult walking for hikers.

Increased hiker use should be avoided unless horse use is stopped. It is too close to a road for a camping increase.

Trail - Stabilize horse traffic.

Campsites - No added sites.

TRAIL 620

CHEROKEE ORCHARD OLD ROADS

Within the old orchard are numerous old roads now overgrown, most of which are not used, even as manways. These roads have sufficient vegetation and are not used enough to have erosion problems.

This is an interesting area, with many old homesites, and offers good possibilities for short loops, nature trails, or a connecting route for hikers from Sugarlands to Dudley Creek.

Trail - Possibility of construction of short loops.

Campsites - Probably none.

TRAILS 621 THROUGH 630

DUDLEY CREEK STABLES HORSE TRAILS AND ASSOCIATED MANWAYS

These trails are used largely by concessionaires' horse parties, with some traffic from local people, including poachers.

(1) Little Dudley Creek Route to Mount LeConte. This is somewhat better than average for a horse trail. The first mile and a half of trail follows a road bed that is muddy in some portions, but only one section is in poor condition. The trail forks off after this and becomes drier, with a persistent shallow rut and some exposed roots.

(2) Kear Branch Manway is well used and easy to follow. It is narrow, steep in places, and in good condition. There is an illegal camp at an old homesite.

(3) Indian Camp Branch Manway (connects the horsetrail with Roaring Fork Road). The manway is very clear. There are some rocks, but no mud; it is easy walking and well graded.

(4) Big Dudley Route to Mount LeConte (Surry Fork Trail Loop to Little Dudley Creek near stables). This trail shows signs of heavy use, including exposed roots, ruts, and some mud. The mud is deep

in places where the trail crosses the head of a stream. After the road cut at Dudley Creek, the trail becomes stony making walking difficult. Near the stables the trail becomes muddy again.

(5) Big Dudley to Little Dudley--upper connector. This trail is heavily used. Above Big Dudley the trail is rutted but has frequent water breaks that have slowed erosion. The descent into Little Dudley Valley is also rutted and very muddy. The trail needs maintenance and possibly a decrease in use.

(6) Daddy's Branch Trail. This trail is in good condition near the stable. The connector roads to Dudley Creek and Little Dudley Creek are in fair shape. The trail continuing up Daddy's Branch is muddy and widens to 2 or 3 meters.

(7) Bell Branch. This trail has continuous ruts and mud in the low areas, but the width is moderate (1.5 to 1.8 meters).

(8) Manway up Little Dudley to Grapeyard Ridge. This trail is easy to follow for about one-half a mile then fades. The trail is very lightly used and almost completely grown up with vegetation.

(9) Manway to Winnesota. There is an old trail, now used mostly by animals, up Winnesota. It is overgrown and very lightly used by man.

The horse trails in this area are unsuited to an increase in foot traffic, and have locally moderate-to-severe erosion problems. Some of the old homesites would make good camping areas. The whole area is completely dominated by horse use at the moment but, if conflicts could be avoided, it should absorb some day hikers and backpackers.

TRAIL 631

TRILLIUM GAP TRAIL - ROARING FORK

MOTOR NATURE TRAIL TO TRILLIUM GAP

The first section of this trail to Grotto Falls is heavily used by day hikers. Brushy Mountain is also a popular day hiker destination and some continue beyond the falls. There is moderate horse and backpacker traffic. The trail offers big trees, flowers, falls, and a good view at the top.

The first one-fourth mile of the trail is gravelled, and the trail is in good condition, with little erosion or off-trail vegetation damage. The trail is wide throughout its length (up to 3.1 meters), and a few places are deeply eroded. Bank erosion becomes a problem where the trail traverses steep slopes. Exposed roots and rocks are common, but the soil is compacted so walking is not difficult.

The trail narrows after Grotto Falls, but horse plowing is much more evident and has caused large mudholes at points where seepage runs across the trail.

This trail might tolerate some increase in foot traffic if horse traffic were reduced. The trail is already popular and easily accessible, and traffic will probably continue to

increase in any case. No camping is suggested because of the heavy day hiker use, steep slopes, and nice wild flower areas.

Trail - Stabilize traffic; intensive maintenance.

Campsites - Do not add.

TRAIL 632

PORTER'S FLAT TRAIL TO TRILLIUM GAP

This trail is used both by backpackers and day hikers, but is one of the least used approaches to Mount LeConte.

The trail is generally in fair condition. The tread is generally less than 1 meter wide, but exposed roots and rocks are common in the lower half of the trail.

The trail probably needs more maintenance to prevent water erosion. Traffic should be stabilized or possibly increased slightly. Day use and major access with steep slopes discourage adding campsites.

Trail - Stabilize, or slight increase in foot use.

Campsites - Do not add.

TRAIL 633

TRILLIUM GAP TRAIL TO MOUNT LECONTE

This trail is used by horse parties, backpackers, and some dayhikers traveling to and from the top of Mount LeConte.

This trail is horse plowed and has a number of erosion problems. The worst erosion originates from runoff in a blowdown near LeConte Lodge. The water erosion continues downslope in the forested areas. Horse damage increases at the lower elevations, especially below 5,640 feet. Approaching Trillium Gap, there is about a mile of horse plowing and mudholes. The trail is usually between 1.0 and 1.5 meters wide, and the depth is usually about 2.5 centimeters, deepening to 50 centimeters in front of some of the water bars.

This trail needs a decrease in horse use and an increase in maintenance. No new campsites should be established, because the trail is already intensively used.

Trail - Intensive maintenance. Decrease horse use, if possible, or investigate with Rainbow Falls.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 634

BRUSHY MOUNTAIN SPUR FROM TRILLIUM GAP

This trail is used by hikers interested in the views from Brushy Mountain. The trail is deeply rutted and is down to bedrock through most of the section near Trillium Gap. The upper section varies from almost no erosion to less than 15 centimeters deep, and is consistently less than 1 meter wide. A few spots are muddy.

The traffic on this trail is the outcome of traffic on the Trillium Gap trail and the trail to the hiking club cabin. As in the case of the Trillium Gap trail, the expected increase in hikers in the future can be accommodated, but no increased usage should be encouraged.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 635

RAINBOW FALLS HORSE TRAIL TO MOUNT LECONTE

This trail is used heavily by horses going to LeConte Lodge (pack horses, concessionaire-organized trips, and private parties). The trail is popular with day hikers to Rainbow Falls and the summit of Mount LeConte, and is also used by overnight visitors to the lodge and by backpackers.

The trail is well worn and eroded, generally 1 to 2 meters in width. The trail is extremely rough traveling on foot. Much of it is worn to bare rock and tree roots. Water erosion and horses are continuing to damage the surface, and the trail shows no signs of recovery. Some sectiions of the trail are very muddy (both in the lower and upper portions of the trail). A new cutoff at Rocky Spur is 100 percent mud and horse plowed and difficult walking. The horse traffic is already kicking up rocks and will probably eventually wear through. There is a section of trail with deep mud between Rainbow Falls and the creek crossing the north side of the stream. Walking through this area is difficult.

This trail is in poor condition and needs better maintenance. Adding any camping is out of the question. Maintaining traffic

at the present level will not fix the mudholes or allow the water-eroded areas to recover.

A significant reduction in traffic is probably not possible because horses use this trail going to the lodge. Closure would mean routing the traffic elsewhere and damaging another trail, probably Trillium Gap.

Trail - Needs specific investigation. Definitely no increase in traffic.

Campsites - No site added.

TRAIL 636

RAINBOW ALLS FOOT TRAIL - CHEROKEE ORCHARD TO HORSE TRAIL

Horses are prohibited on this section of trail, but day hiker use is intensive, and a fair number of backpackers and overnight travelers utilize this way to Mount LeConte.

The trail is eroded and the surface is very rough, with exposed tree roots and rocks. The erosion is due to intensive use and the steep slopes over which the trail is routed (frequently greater than 10 degrees). The foot trail is a poor alternative to the horse trail. Other alternatives need to be found. Stabilizing the traffic or decreasing it somewhat is unlikely to be effective in controlling the erosion and increased maintenance may be difficult on the steep slopes. An increase in camping would only increase the damage.

Trail - Investigate. Definitely no increase.

Campsites - No increase.

TRAIL 637

LECONTE PHONE LINE (MANWAY) - CHEROKEE ORCHARD TO LECONTE LODGE (FOLLOWS LECONTE CREEK)

This manway is largely used by people familiar with the LeConte area and is partially maintained by lodge personnel.

This trail is already showing signs of some erosion and there are some exposed roots. The lower portion from Cherokee Orchard to the first crossing of the Rainbow Falls Horse Trail is well traveled. The trail then fades into a boulder field below the falls. The trail starts again at the fourth creek crossing (Dry Ford) up to Rainbow Falls Trail below Bullhead junction and then continues to another junction close to the lodge. The upper portion is lightly traveled and steep.

This trail has not been properly routed for development and should not be used for camping.

Trail - Do not maintain.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 638

BULLHEAD TRAIL TO MOUNT LECONTE

This trail is used by day hikers, lodge visitors, and back-packers traveling to Mount LeConte from Cherokee Orchard.

In terms of erosion, this trail is the best of the five approaches to Mount LeConte. The lack of horses, the lack of an intermediate scenic attraction such as Rainbow Falls, and the length of the trail help to keep the traffic moderate. The trail is in fair-to-good condition. Mud is almost nonexistent, being restricted to two points of insignificant extent at Bullhead Gap and the gap above Balsam Point. In both areas the slope of the trail is zero. The trail surface is well worn, however, and a great increase in use is not advisable.

Because of the heavy traffic to the top of the mountain and the steep slopes, adding campsites is not advisable.

Trail - Retain present level of use.

Campsites - Make no additions.

TRAILS 639 AND 640

THE ALUM CAVE TRAIL

The Alum Cave Trail is one of the most heavily used in the park, both by day hikers and backpackers. It is probably the most commonly-used route to the top of Mount LeConte, and the section to the cave receives intensive day hiker use. The trail has more developments than most other trails in the park and it is surfaced.

The lower section of the trail has been substantially widened by heavy use and shows extensive bank erosion. The hikers climb down to the stream, resulting in numerous small guffer reroutes and eroded areas below Arch Rock. There were four illegal campsites below Arch Rock, and several of the point bars in the stream and eroded areas near the trail could have been used for camping. The upper section of the trail is steeper and there are few illegal sites, but the bank erosion is severe and the trail is frequently widened past 2 meters width. In the laurel slicks and some of the spruce-fir areas, the soil has completely worn away, leaving the trail on bare rock. The whole trail has an eroded and intensively-used look. Some of the worst sections are over 6 meters wide and 30 meters long. (Note: Despite the fact that the trail is intensively eroded in places, the trail is basically flat, and the walking surface

is generally good. Some of the bare rock areas may be difficult when icy, but a backpacker with a heavy load would probably not complain about trail conditions.)

This trail is so popular with day hikers and overnighters traveling to Mount LeConte that adding any campsites along the trail would probably result in overuse and vandalism. The trail needs intensive maintenance, and present policy of surfacing and building walls, etc., should probably continue. Because the problem is day hikers (who tend to walk two abreast), recovery of the vegetation is unlikely, even with reduced use. More maintenance and aritifical widening of the trail may actually help prevent bank erosion. The only area really suitable for campsites is the stream valley at the lower end of the trail. The rest of the area is either too steep or at too great a distance from water. The lower area is so close to the road that overuse would be very likely, and it does not provide adequate distance to fit into a proper backpacking schedule. More trail patrol might help the illegal camping problem, although day hikers will continue to cause erosion in areas away from the trail.

Trail - Intensive maintenance.

Campsites - No sites should be established; more patrol needed.

TRAIL 641

THE BOULEVARD TRAIL - THE AT TO MOUNT LECONTE

This trail is used by ambitious day hikers and people traveling overnight to Mount LeConte. There is no horse traffic, and the trail has substantially less use than Alum Cave, Rainbow Falls, or the lower end of Trillium Gap Trail.

The initial 200 meters of the trail is rough, with mud and ruts, and needs maintenance. In general, the trail is in adequate condition. The trail varies in width from about .5 to 1.3 meters. Problems with exposed roots and water-eroded ruts exist near Anakeesta Knob, and there are some rough sections below Myrtle Point. There is some mud in the flats, although it is usually very shallow.

There is a little illegal camping in the area, especially around Mount Kephart.

The trail probably should remain at about the present level of use. No camping should be added because the traffic is already so heavy in the neighborhood.

Trail - Stabilize use; intensive maintenance.

Campsites - No new sites.

TRAILS 642 THROUGH 645, AND 668

TRAILS ON MOUNT LECONTE AND THE SHELTER

(1) Myrtle Point Trail (from Boulevard). This small section is heavily eroded and intensively maintained. Exposed roots and bare rock form most of the trail. The trail is steep and will continue to erode. Stabilization of traffic is advised.

Trail - Stabilize traffic; intensive maintenance.

(2) West Peak Manway (LeConte Horse Gate to West Peak). This manway is regularly used. It is moderately eroded and has many exposed roots. Detours have been made around fallen trees. The trail might be maintained, but a decision would have to be made as to whether increased hiker use would cause further erosion.

(3) LeConte Crest Trail (Alum Cave Trail horse gate to LeConte Lodge and Boulevard Trail and LeConte Lodge to High Top). This section of trail receives a very high percentage of impact, since it serves traffic from all routes, giving access to the mountain top. This trail was long ago eroded to bedrock and is now generally of stable depth. The trail is from 1 to 2 meters wide. Much drainage work has been done near the lodge to divert runoff water. Trail use should remain stable.

Trail - Depends on the future of the lodge.

(4) Cliff Tops Trail (Old LeConte campground to Cliff Tops). This section of trail is characterized by exposed roots and rocks. The trail is widened to over a meter by use, and continued heavy use will probably erode it to bedrock. On the portion near LeConte Lodge, this has already happened and the trail is rough walking in places.

As with the rest of the LeConte trails, use should be stabilized if not reduced.

Trail - Stabilize use.

(5) LeConte "Lower Trail" from the horse stalls to the lodge and from there to Rainbows Falls Trail. This section is heavily used by horses, and bare rock is extensive. Heavy maintenance has helped to check the erosion. Use should remain stable, as should maintenance.

Trail - Intensive Maintenance.

(6) Shelter area and Campsites. LeConte shelter is very heavily used, and there is considerable vegetation damage

in the area (much of which is due to lodge and not shelter activities). Illegal camping is very common around the shelter and at other points on the mountain top.

The top of Mount LeConte is so heavily used by day hikers and lodge visitors that an increase in camping or shelter space would only make existing problems more chronic. The area probably needs more frequent patrol.

Campsites - If anything, use should be reduced - not expanded.

TRAIL 646

THE JUMPOFF (MANWAY)

This is a common goal of day hikers, many of whom also visit Charlies Bunion or Mount LeConte.

The trail to the Jumpoff is badly eroded, and it has several ruts over 2 meters wide in less than one-half mile. The Jumpoff is occasionally used for illegal camping.

Decreasing the load on this small section is unlikely. It is possible that an increase in maintenance or rerouting would help curtail the erosion.

Trail - Try to block off or else maintain.

Campsites - No sites added.

TRAIL 647

BIG LOCUST NATURE TRAIL

This trail is used entirely by day users and is popular with picnickers and wild flower lovers. Use is very heavy.

This trail is exceptionally rutted and has many exposed roots and rocks. In a number of places the trail is widened into two or three separate paths. Big Locust is an exceptionally diverse wild flower area and has been damaged by overuse.

A decrease in foot traffic is desirable, but it is probably too late for remedial action. Graveling a noticeable narrow trail might help to keep people on the track.

Trail - Intensive maintenance.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 648

BUCKEYE NATURE TRAIL

This trail is used exclusively by day users. The trail is popular with wild flower lovers.

This trail has one of the greatest concentrations of guffer reroutes in the park. It is difficult to determine the original location of the trail. The surface is rough, covered with rocks and roots. The understory in the area is severely disturbed. There is a manway leading upstream to a rock ledge.

This trail should be closed for rehabilitation and then be graveled to encourage people to stay on the path.

Trail - Intensive maintenance.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 651

PORTERS CREEK TRAIL - HIKING CLUB CABIN TO CAMPSITE 31

This trail is moderately used by day hikers and backpackers. It is in a wild flower and big tree area. The trail is generally in good condition, although there are some rocks, tree roots, and a little mud. These do not present a problem for walkers at the moment.

Campsite 31 is muddy and, although it is small, it is deteriorating. Illegal camping around the Hiking Club Cabin and near the foot log occurs occasionally.

The closure of the road to Ramsay Cascade area will probably result in some increased use through this section.

Adding campsites along Porters Creek is not advisable, since the day hiker load at the area is likely to increase, but a heavy load of backpackers might damage the fragile wild flower sites and the trailside vegetation.

Campsite 31 should be reviewed and possibly be repaired or moved.

Trail - Anticipate some increase in day hikers. Stabilize backpackers.

Campsites - Review site placement and retain at a low level.

TRAIL 652

PORTERS CREEK MANWAY - CAMPSITE 31 TO THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

This manway is lightly used by the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and other experienced day hikers and backpackers.

This trail is a maintained manway, presumably kept clear by hiking club members. The lower portion is in good condition with very few roots and ruts. As the trail goes up the ridge, it follows Dry Sluice Gap in the dry creek bed where most of the erosion is due to natural water action and not to hiker activity. The upper end of the trail is very steep and liable to slides and has not been completely graded. Some illegal camping occurs in the lower flats.

The upper end of this trail would degrade very quickly under heavy use in wet weather. The park should not mark the trail or encourage use unless it is properly graded and fully maintained.

Trail - Manway only, unless maintenance is changed.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 658

ROAD TO THE HIKING CLUB CABIN

This road is used extensively by day hikers and moderately by backpackers. The area is popular with wild flower enthusiasts and members of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club.

The road is well maintained and can tolerate heavy day hiker use. The main limitations on its use are imposed by the trails starting at Porters Flat and not by this access road.

Trail - Good location for more short loops and day hikes.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 663

RAMSAY CASCADES ROAD

This route was open to private cars, but has recently been converted to trail status. At the moment, it is used largely by day hikers and fishermen.

Presently the road is well maintained. A few vehicle ruts occur where cars pull over to pass one another.

This road could tolerate both foot and horse use, and there are sites available for camping in the flats along the creek. Good flower areas should be avoided, however. Since the Ramsay Cascades trail has been overused, it might be best to wait until the Cascades Trail has recovered before encouraging more backpacking in the area.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Depends on conditions of other trails.

TRAIL 664

ROAD TO GREENBRIER FIRE TOWER

This road has been used largely by day hikers in the past who were headed towards the fire tower on Greenbrier Pinnacle.

The road is in fair condition due to water erosion. The walking surface is generally stony and about 1.5 to 2 meters wide. The fire tower site is occasionally used for illegal camping.

The trail could probably handle more traffic, but due to the closure of the Ramsay Cascades Road visitor use is likely to decrease. Adding some campsites should be considered; the old fire tower site or some other area on the ridge top might provide a suitable place. The slopes on the way up are steep, but water is available on the way to the top. Water bars would help prevent further erosion on the trail.

Trail - Maintain use.

Campsites - No addition, or add site if management of the remainder of the area indicates desirability.

TRAIL 665

RAMSAY CASCADES TRAIL

This trail has been intensively used by day hikers who enjoy the big trees, wild flowers, and the falls at the end.

The trail has serious problems with exposed roots and ruts. In some places, the trail is worn through to bare rock. There is some vegetation damage and compaction around the three big tulip trees. Walking is difficult on the upper section near the falls. Many roots have been damaged on that portion of the trail by heavy traffic.

Illegal camping occurs regularly, and there is a well-used site above the cascade.

The recent road closure will remove part of the day hiker traffic from this trail. This may result in improved condition of vegetation along the trail. It might be desirable to establish a campsite somewhere near the trailhead if the road is ever closed at the base.

Trail - Reduce use.

Campsites - No sites on trail; may add near trailhead if road closed far enough down.

TRAILS 646, 650, 653, 655, 656, 657, 659, 660, 661, 662

OLD ROADS AND MANWAYS - GREENBRIER AREA

Most of these routes are used by local people or others familiar with the area. Some may be considered poacher trails; others are used primarily by people visiting cemeteries and by curious day hikers.

(1) First road to the right off Ramsay Cascades Road. This road dead-ends at a cemetery. No further use is suggested unless it is extended.

(2) Road down the east side of the Little Pigeon from Ramsay Cascades Road. This road also goes to a cemetery but may also be used as a through-trail to Little Bird Branch. If the path were cleared and maintained, it would probably be in usable condition.

(3) Road up Little Bird Branch. This is a slightly-used manway which runs to some old homesites and then disappears approaching Copeland Divide. There are some roots and rocks. If this trail were maintained and properly positioned, it could probably take a moderate traffic load.

(4) Emerts Cove Road extension. This road goes into a cemetery. Aside from vehicle ruts, there is little erosion except near the hill close to the cemetery, where there has been water action.

(5) Copeland Divide. This trail is so overgrown it is difficult to follow. There are a number of former roads in the area. An increase in use would help keep this trail open and possible to follow.

(6) Copeland Creek. An old road runs up this creek through numerous old homesites. The roadbed is badly rutted in places but is now growing in. The road is more open higher up, and there are two illegal campsites. The road becomes a trail and follows the creek. With proper maintenance, the trail probably could be open for hiker use. The old homesites present some good possibilities for campsites.

(7) James Ridge (via Injun Creek) Trail - The trail largely follows an old road, occasionally leaving it in the flats and in areas completely overgrown with rhododendron. The road is rutted and rocky in places. There is evidence that the level of erosion is presently less than in the past. Much of the route could be used as a maintained trail, but some sections would need to be rerouted to avoid water erosion. There are some excellent potential campsites near the old homesites, and the area would probably appeal to backpackers interested in short easy trips. There has been regular camping, possibly by poachers, at James Gap.

(8) Rhododendron Creek Trail. This is an old road. Near James Gap, heath has covered the bed, but it is well graded and would probably make a good walking surface if cleared. There are some ruts and muddy areas in the old road, and a few of the fords are foot plowed. Water course erosion has occurred along the stream. The area is full of old homesites and evidence of hog rooting. However, several possibilities for nice campsites are available. If opened for hiker use, it would require some rerouting and maintenance, but could support moderate traffic. Because of the fords and flat areas, horse use is not advisable.

The main trail goes over a small ridge to Ramsay Cascades Road. The old road widens and is rutted from water action above the main road. This section is poorly routed and on a steep slope.

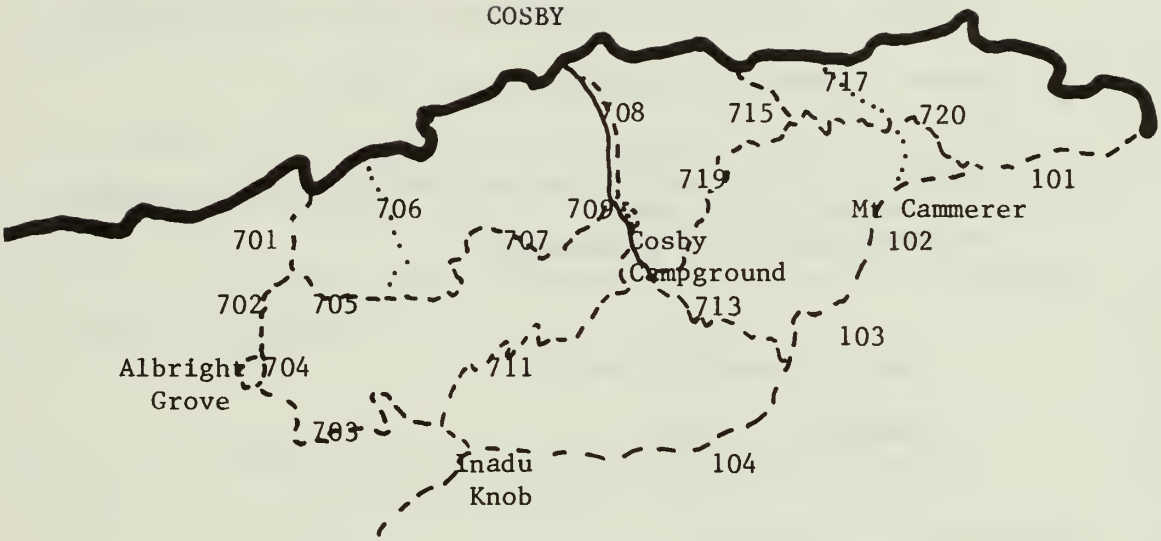
The lower Rhododendron Creek Trail follows a remnant of a road. There are several small waterfalls and cascades on this route, and it could be maintained with careful planning.

(9) Little Rhododendron Creek. This is a small trail, probably used largely by poachers and animals. Properly routed, it could take moderate traffic load.

(10) Manway to Whaley Cemetery. This path is lightly used, with no erosion problems. It is probably not long enough to attract many visitors.

These old roads and manways offer a number of possibilities, both for establishing short loop walks and for providing more backcountry camping opportunities. It should not be assumed that the old roadbed runs in the best possible position, however, and reroutes may occasionally be necessary. Many of the successional flats would make interesting locations for small campsites; the sites just need to be set in the drier sections and placed far enough from the road to discourage abuse.

SECTION 7 - COSBY



TRAILS 701 AND 702

INDIAN CAMP ROAD TO MADDRON BALD TRAIL

This road is moderately used by day hikers and backpackers.

The road is graveled and in good condition. It can probably absorb almost any increase in foot traffic.

Because of the limitations on the trails above it, however, no great increase is recommended.

Trail - Stabilize traffic.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 703

MADDRON BALD TRAIL

This trail is used by backpackers and ambitious day hikers. The trailhead on Little River Road is very difficult to find, which probably inhibits use of the area.

The upper end of the trail, in spruce-fir forest, has ruts and exposed roots and rock. The trail improves at the bald. The big trees in the lower section are a good attraction for day hikers. Campsite 29 is new.

The trail needs maintenance or reduced traffic in the upper section, so routing more backpackers through from the Appalachian Trail is not advisable. A few more day hikers in the lower section would probably not cause much deterioration. Day hiker traffic may increase anyway.

Trail - Increase maintenance and stabilize use.

Campsites - No sites.

TRAIL 704

ALBRIGHT GROVE NATURE TRAIL

This trail is used by backpackers as well as day hikers.

The trail surface is, at best, fair, with ruts and exposed roots posing consistent problems. Widening has occurred where benches are placed, and there is compaction around the giant poplar tree.

This trail is in better condition than many other nature trails, but is in danger of being overused. Vegetation damage, particularly cutting of tree roots, should be minimized. Some type of light surfacing might be considered unless the closure of the road below decreases traffic.

Trail - Either decrease use or increase maintenance.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 706

GREENBRIER CREEK TRAIL

This trail is lightly used. It follows an old road from Campsite 34 down Greenbrier Creek to the old road at the park boundary.

The upper section is very narrow and is grown in. It widens to road width and there are ruts and bare rock in the lower portion.

The route needs more use to keep it open.

There is an illegal campsite in Sugar Cove, and adding a site in the area might be possible.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Depends on planning for the area; possibly add one site.

TRAILS 705 AND 707

GABES MOUNTAIN -

(FROM END OF BEARNECK COVE ROAD TO INDIAN CAMP ROAD)

This trail is heavily used by day hikers and moderately used by backpackers. Henwallow Falls serves as the main attraction with a nice view. After the falls, day hiker traffic is reduced.

The first section of the trail to the falls is only fair, with mud spots and exposed roots. The 700-yard side trail to the falls is in poor condition and has several slides and guffer reroutes. The section from Henwallow to Sugar Cove is in good condition and goes through virgin cove forest. The end of the trail near Indian Camp Road is easy walking even though there are some ruts and exposed roots caused by water erosion.

Campsite 34 is in fair condition and has spread out over level ground.

This trail could absorb some increase in traffic, especially with a slight increase in maintenance. Connecting it to a boundary trail system would be better than adding campsites.

Trail - Moderate increase in use.

Campsites - No additions, or add on Greenbrier Creek (Buckeye Lead).

TRAIL 708

COSBY CREEK HORSE TRAIL

This trail is used largely by horses.

Near Highway 32 it is a good trail. Trail conditions gradually deteriorate near the horse-hiring camp. The trail near the camp is not a good surface for foot use.

Trail - Stabilize horse use.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 708

TRITT CEMETERY ROAD FROM HIGHWAY 32

This road is used mostly by local people. It is gravel and is in good condition. It can handle an increase in traffic.

TRAIL 709

ROAD UP BEARNECK COVE FROM COSBY CREEK

This road is, generally, in good condition except for the section off Cosby Road, which has ruts and vehicle ruts. It could absorb more use.

TRAIL 710

TRAIL TO HENWALLOW FALLS -

PORTION FROM COSBY CAMPGROUND TO CRYING CREEK

This trail is used heavily by day hikers and moderately by backpackers. Near the campground the trail surface is rough, with rock and ruts, but is stablized. The remaining sections are fair to poor, with exposed roots and increasing wear. Being close to Cosby Campground, the trail may be expected to get heavy use, and more intensive maintenance may be necessary.

Trail - Intensive maintenance.

Campsites - Add no sites.

TRAIL 11

SNAKE DEN MOUNTAIN TRAIL

This trail is used by backpackers and a few of the more ambitious day hikers.

The trail is in fair-to-good condition. Mud exists on the horse trail below its junction with the gravel road approaching the campground and also in the spruce fir forest on sections approaching the Appalachian Trail. Ruts, exposed roots, and rocks are evident along most of its length. Bank erosion is a problem in only two sections. The lower portion of the trail is a road in good condition.

Old Campsite 33 is badly eroded and muddy. An illegal site (possibly used by the Youth Conservation Corps and now receiving more traffic) is heavily worn. The new Campsite 33 is still in good condition. This trail is in better condition than most in the area to absorb an increase in foot use. Finding good campsites on this trail is somewhat difficult because of the steep slopes. The trail probably should be slated for an increase in day hiker use, with little increase in camping. The forest is virgin and may attract some of the people who are interested in trails like Ramsay Cascade.

Trail - Encourage increase in day hiking.

Campsites - Probably stabilize.

TRAIL 713

LOW GAP JEEP TRAIL - COSBY CAMPGROUND TO LOW GAP

This trail is used by backpackers headed for the Appalachian Trail or Walnut Bottoms and day hikers going to Cammerer or Indian Knob.

The trail is in generally fair shape, with some ruts and exposed tree roots. The Low Gap horse trail connector is in only fair condition, with ruts, some mud, and exposed roots.

The use of Low Gap Trail is largely limited by what the trail it feeds can absorb.

Trail - Depends on adjoining trails.

Campsites - Depends on adjoining trails.

TRAIL 714

COSBY NATURE TRAIL

This trail is used intensively by day hikers, particularly people staying in Cosby Campground.

The trail is paved, but there is damage along the edges. Where asphalt is broken there are ruts. People have ventured off the edges and disturbed the vegetation.

A decrease in use or an increase in maintenance would improve the trail. Visitor use probably should not be increased, in any case.

Trail - Stabilize use; slightly more maintenance.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 715

ROBINSON CREEK TRAIL

This trail is used by day hikers, backpackers and local people.

The lower end is an old road which was originally surfaced with heavy gravel, which interferes somewhat with walking. There are old vehicle ruts, but the surface is now stable. Above the old road is a short connector to the Lower White Rock Trail. The grade to this trail is greater than 10 degrees in some places, and some roots have been exposed by erosion. The trail is, generally, in good condition despite the slope.

This trail could probably take more impact if routed differently or well maintained. It could serve as easy access to camping on the White Rock Trail.

Trail - Increased traffic possible.

Campsites - No additional site close to road.

TRAIL 717

GROUNDHOG RIDGE MANWAY (HIGHWAY 32 TO THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL)

This trail receives light day hiker and backpacker use.

The lower portion of the trail is badly eroded, particularly where it follows the old road up to Groundhog Creek. As the trail climbs the ridge, the condition improves and is rated as fair to good. Up to the junction with Lower White Rock Trail, the width is about .8 of a meter to 1.0 meter. Above the junction it is narrower and overgrown with heath, with a width of .3 to .8 of a meter. The trail fades above the Appalachian Trail and appears to have been rarely used. There were two illegal sites near Lower White Rock Trail.

The trail would need some rerouting and intensive maintenance before taking a heavy increase in traffic.

Trail - Review before increase.

Campsites - Possible increase at lower end.

TRAILS 719 AND 720

LOWER WHITE ROCK TRAIL

This trail is used by backpackers and a few day hikers. The area has good flowers in late spring, but the trail is long and offers few other attractions.

The trail is in good condition through its entire length, with very few rough spots. Although the original trail cut was wide (to 1.5 meters), the vegetation has grown in to make the tread as narrow as one-half a meter.

Campsites included three illegal sites and Campsite 35, all in good condition. The area is lightly used by backpackers.

Both the trail and the campsites could probably absorb an increase in hiker traffic. Adding a campsite might help, but connecting it to a more extensive boundary trail would probably draw more traffic.

Trail - Increase hiker use.

Campsites - Increase camping.

THE MANWAY FROM HE APPALACHIAN TRAIL TO MOUNT GUYOT

Due to blowdowns, this trail is difficult to locate. The path wanders and splits and is blocked by numerous trees. It is not a suitable side trip for backpackers now, and since the summit is not clear and offers no vista, probably should not be opened.

SECTION 8 - BOUNDARY TRAIL

TRAIL 801

BOUNDARY TRAIL - MILLERS COVE TO ACE GAP

This trail is in excellent condition and needs more traffic to keep it open. After it crosses the park boundary into Millers Cove and follows Cane Creek, it disappears into a maze of washedout roads and manways. Finding the trailhead from the outside would be close to impossible without a topographic map. The intersection of the trail is not marked. This problem probably cuts down on visitor use. Aside from local people, most of the trail users are probably stronger and more adventurous backpackers. Day hikers are probably rare.

There is much evidence of illegal camping in this section. There were several sites without fire pits that were probably used for illegal camping in the past (and not recorded). There may be some poacher use here.

Getting more people into this area requires improving access and probably adding campsites or attractions. A few trail signs at the end would help.

The trail can stand a strong increase in foot use. Connecting it to Beard Cane would greatly improve traffic flow.

Trail - Try to increase backpacker use.

Campsites - Possible addition at Beard Cane if trails connected.

TRAIL 802

BOUNDARY TRAIL - ACE GAP TO RICH MOUNTAIN ROAD

This trail is lightly used by backpackers, is in very good condition, and could tolerate more foot use. There are a few places where it is more worn than others, and there is a small amount of bank erosion.

There is one illegal campsite large enough to be mistaken for the legal campsite at Kelly Gap. The legal site is small and probably at carrying capacity or slightly below. It is limited by banks on either side.

More signs are needed (1) to mark the legal camp, and (2) to mark the intersection at Ace Gap. This section of trail is very easy traveling, has good surface, is well graded, and has no fords. More campsites might be established. One problem with encouraging use in this section is access. All the roads coming in are unpaved.

There were several poacher trails and camps outside the boundary and probably fairly intensive local use.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Increase possible.

TRAIL 803

BOUNDARY TRAIL -

RICH MOUNTAIN ROAD TO CERULEAN KNOB

The trail is basically in very good shape and could withstand a small increase in foot traffic. The trail gets light-to-moderate use from horse parties and backpackers. There is probably also a small amount of day hiker traffic.

Damage due to excessive horse traffic is visible in a few small areas but, generally, the trail is at carrying capacity in this respect.

The Rich Mountain shelter seems to be at or slightly below carrying capacity. Trash distribution is somewhat high, but vegetation damage is minor and is restricted to the area immediately surrounding the shelter.

A new legal site, 5, is located on a bench at the head of a stream. The site is concave, is located right on the stream, and has very poor drainage. Sanitation is poor, and use of the site should be limited.

Trail - Could stand increase in foot traffic with a small amount of maintenance. Increase in horse traffic is not desirable.

Campsites - Retain present system.

TRAIL 804

BOUNDARY TRAIL - CERULEAN KNOB TO CROOKED ARM

This trail is an old jeep road and is well used by horse parties and day hikers.

The trail is on the contour and not very subject to water action, and is in fair-to-good condition.

Any plans for increased traffic should encourage backpackers coming through on the Boundary Trail, rather than more day users or more horse parties from Cades Cove.

Trail - Increase backpackers.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 805

BOUNDARY TRAIL - THE INTERSECTION WITH CROOKED ARM TO SCHOOLHOUSE GAP

This trail is probably one of the least used in the park. In fact, the trailhead at Schoolhouse Gap is difficult to distinguish from two manways on either side of it. The trail needs to be better maintained, and an increase in foot use might help to keep it open. Bank erosion seems to be the only problem at present. This is not due to overuse but to the steep slopes, the limestone substrata in the middle section, and the lack of maintenance.

There was only one small illegal campsite in this section, and the trail offers few possibilities for camping because of exceptionally steep slopes and the lack of gaps. There are some flats near the end of this section which might be suitable, but they are near Campsite 6. The best way to increase traffic might be to establish a site somewhere along the road that runs through Schoolhouse Gap.

Trail - Increase foot use (steep banks would probably erode under horse use).

Campsites - A new site on or near the trail would help to draw backpackers onto this trail.

TRAIL 806

BOUNDARY TRAIL - SCHOOLHOUSE GAP TO THE "Y" AT TOWNSEND

This section of the boundary trail is lightly used by both horses and hikers. The traffic is probably divided between day hikers and people hiking long distances along the boundary. The trail has few attractions and no legal campsites. It is in very good condition throughout, with only a few small areas showing signs of significant erosion. At no point is the trail operating above its carrying capacity.

Vegetation along the trail is undisturbed in most sections and, in some areas, covers the trail. Much of the surface is covered in topsoil and litter, and where rocks (and mineral soil) have been uncovered they do not impede walking.

Scattered areas of horse plow are present throughout the trail. These are presently of small extent and are creating no serious problems. A small increase in horse traffic could be tolerated if areas presently at carrying capacity were better maintained.

The trail runs primarily along ridge tops and has no available drinking water, making it a poor area for campsites. Three

illegal campsites were found, all of very infrequent use. Two of these were in the middle of the trail and had room for only a single tent. They were probably used only in emergency. The third was in an open area alongside the trail and had space for two or three tents, but had been used very little.

The trail could tolerate a moderate increase in foot traffic without increased maintenance. Any substantial increase in horse traffic would probably have to be coupled with maintenance in the areas presently operating at or near carrying capacity.

The area is not well suited for campsites.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Additions difficult, but would increase traffic.

TRAIL 807

THE BOUNDARY TRAIL - THE "Y"

AT TOWNSEND TO METCALF BOTTOMS

This trail is in excellent condition throughout its length and could probably tolerate a substantial increase in foot traffic. There are no major erosion problems anywhere along this section. The Boundary Trail is not heavily used and this stretch is typical. There are no campsites in this section and almost no developments. The trail does not go to any vistas or vantage points, and it would be difficult to see from the ridge in summer. During dry weather there is no water on the trail, although there is one large intermittent spring near one of the gaps.

The trail could tolerate considerably more foot use and a minor increase in horse traffic in dry weather. The lack of campsites and the length of the trail discourage backpackers. There are several potential sites for small camps that are at least one and one-half miles from the nearest road, although in all cases the hikers would have to carry water. The trail does present some hazards to campers. There are numerous beetle-killed pines and several large windfalls. For the next few years the danger from falling trees is likely to be high.

The area is very dry, in general, and would be easy to set on fire.

Several poacher trails intersect this trail, and it may be more heavily used by local residents than most of the trails in the park.

There is one rerouted section of trail that should be replaced before traffic is increased; it heads straight downslope at a corner where the trail is difficult to find. The ford at the "Y" is very deep and a reroute is highly desirable.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Add sites, if possible.

TRAIL 808

BOUNDARY TRAIL -

METCALF BOTTOMS TO LAUREL FALLS TRAIL

This section of trail is in good condition and could tolerate an increase in foot traffic. It is very similar to the rest of the Boundary Trail.

There are no campsites along this section of trail and, since the big trees nearby are not a well-known attraction, there is very little to draw the visitor out into this area.

There is water in the valley and it might be possible to find a suitable place to add a campsite. This might draw people over Cove Mountain from Sugarlands.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Add site(s), if possible.

TRAIL 809

BOUNDARY TRAIL - INTERSECTION WITH LAUREL FALLS TRAIL TO SUGARLANDS (INCLUDING COVE MOUNTAIN TOWER ROAD)

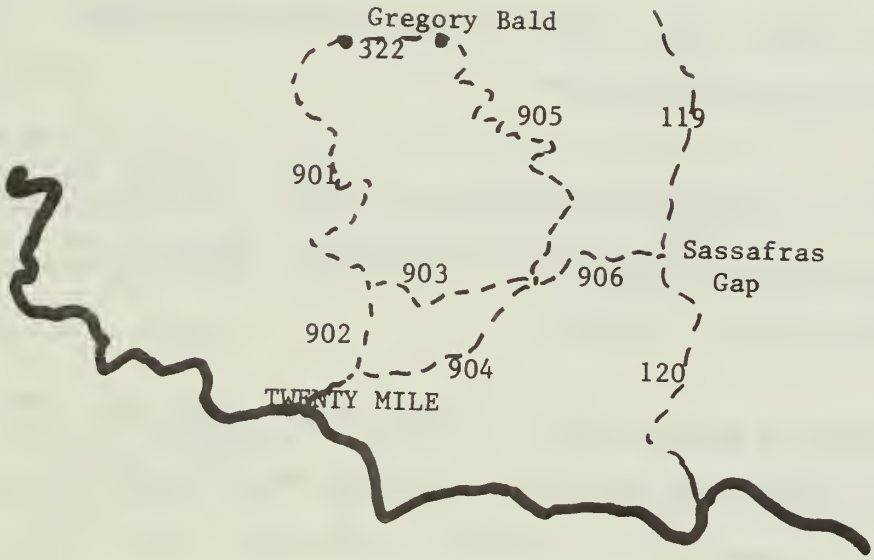
This trail is used largely by day hikers, as there are no campsites. The section that was a jeep trail is in good condition and can absorb an increase in hiker traffic. The trail down Chinquapin Ridge to the Laurel Falls intersection is narrower and noticeably rutted. It is generally, in fair condition, with some poor sections. An increase in traffic should be accompanied by an increase in maintenance to control water erosion.

There are illegal campsites at Phil's View and the fire tower. An access road outside the park allows vehicles to get to the fire tower. The area needs better patrol. Adding campsites on the ridge is possible, perhaps at the fire tower site, and would encourage backpacker use of the whole Boundary Trail.

Trail - Increase backpacker use.

Campsites - Possibly add one or two.

SECTION 9 - TWENTY MILE



TRAIL 901

WOLFE RIDGE TRAIL

This trail gets light use, mostly from backpackers. Hikers camping at Sheep Pen Gap often walk the short distance to Parsons Bald over the upper end of the trail, and day hikers may, on occasion, walk a short distance up the trail from Twenty Mile Ranger Station.

The trail is lightly maintained but the tread is narrow and smooth and the walking surface is excellent. There are no significant erosion problems.

Campsite 95 is small, clean, and seems to get light use. The only problem is that the site drains into the water source, which is located right on the edge of the site. This is not likely to be a hazard at present usage levels, but could cause problems if the site were expanded. The only illegal site is located in a gap near the upper end of the trail. It is small and used infrequently. It is well located except for the lack of drinking water.

Trail - Increase in foot use possible.

Campsites - Present system or slight expansion.

TRAIL 902

LOWER DALTONS BRANCH (WOLFE RIDGE)

This trail gets a moderate amount of backpacker traffic and some day hiker traffic as well. The lower end is a restricted jeep trail and shows signs of recent vehicle use. The trail has some mud and exposed rock but could still stand an increase in foot use. The lower end on the jeep trail has vehicle ruts where water runs in wet weather, but the rest of the surface is in very good condition. Attention given to channeling water off the trail would prevent further damage due to water action.

The only campsite is a small, infrequently-used illegal one near the lower end. No camping facilities are needed in the area.

Trail - Increase in foot use is possible; encourage day hikers.

Campsites - No change.

TRAIL 903

DALTON GAP SECTION OF TWENTY MILE LOOP

This trail is lightly used by backpackers and day hikers.

The trail is in good-to-excellent condition. It is well graded and set perpendicular to the slope. An increase in foot use would help keep the trail open.

One legal campsite on the trail, 94, is only moderately used and has not spread widely. It can probably sustain use at the present level indefinitely. Other campsites could be added, but there are already two others nearby.

Trail - Increase day hiker and possibly backpacker use.

Campsites - Trail is too short for additions; maintain present level or small increase in use.

TRAIL 904

LOWER TWENTY MILE CREEK TRAIL

This trail is a restricted jeep trail that can be used as an access to several other trails, and it is moderately used by backpackers, day hikers, and horse parties. The trail is well graded and surfaced and could support an increase in both horse and foot traffic. There are minor amounts of surface erosion along the entire trail and some vehicle ruts at the upper end, but these are not numerous and are causing few problems.

There is one campsite on the trail which is in good condition.

Trail - A moderate increase in foot use is possible, also a small increase in horse use.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 905

TWENTY MILE CREEK TRAIL

FROM PROCTOR GAP TO MOORE SPRING

This trail is principally a backpacker route, although day hikers probably use the lower end occasionally. The trail, although steep, is in very good condition, being narrow and with only slight erosion problems. There are a few muddy areas on the flats at the lower end of the trail and a minor amount of surface erosion on the upper grades, but these do not impede walking to any significant extent. The trail could take a moderate increase in foot traffic.

The two legal campsites on the trail are relatively small and probably rarely support more than three or four parties at a time. They are both in good shape and are probably at their proper carrying capacity or slightly below. There are two infrequently-used illegal sites on the trail.

Trail - No change.

Campsites - Present system, with possible small incraase in use.

TRAIL 906

TWENTY MILE TRUCK TRAIL TO SASSAFRAS GAP

This jeep road is lightly used by backpackers, horses, and occasional day hikers. The trail is in fair-to-poor condition, largely due to water erosion rather than to use.

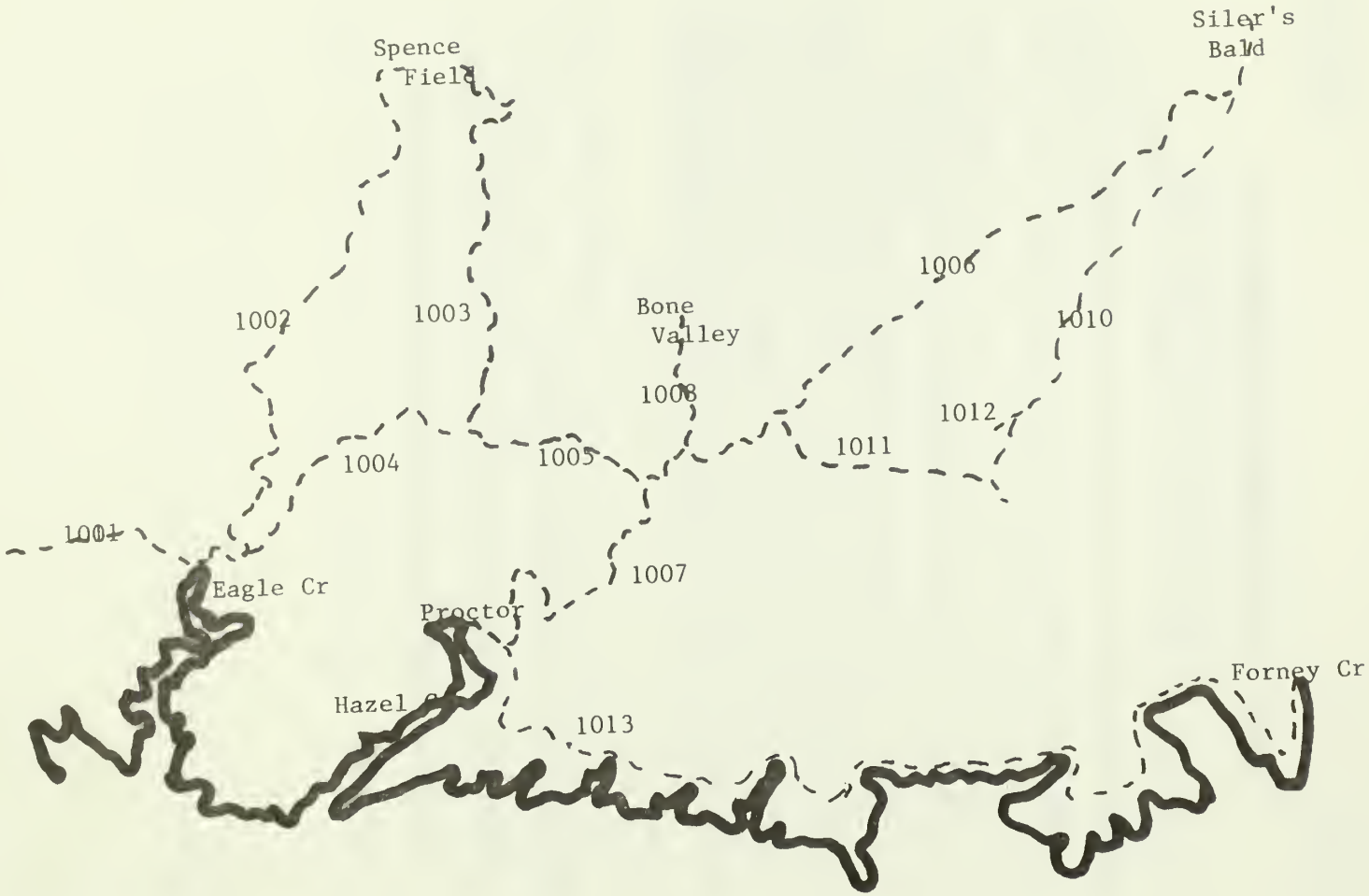
This truck trail is wide and quite stony. Water action is very evident. It can sustain an increase in horse use and foot traffic in the better sections. With improved maintenance, the entire road can tolerate increased use. It is an easier, although longer, route to Shuckstack Tower than the Appalachian Trail and can better tolerate increased impact.

A campsite could be added near the base.

Trail - An increase in use with increased maintenance.

Campsites - Too steep; only possible place is at base.

SECTION 10 - HAZEL CREEK



TRAIL 1001

THE LAKE TRAIL - EAGLE CREEK TO SASSAFRAS GAP

The trail is designated for both horse and foot use, but appears to get only light hiker traffic, and no horse sign of any kind was encountered at the time this survey was conducted. It runs on and off old road cuts and is difficult to follow in places. Several manways diverge from the trail at Campsite 91 and is difficult to determine which is the proper route to follow. A few strategically placed blazes would help hikers follow the trail.

There are no signs of serious erosion of the trail and the trail could support more use. In fact, more traffic might help make the trail easier to follow. However, the last mile or so below Sassafras Gap is very steep and would not hold up well under heavy use.

Both of the maintained campsites are nicely located and could easily take more use. No illegal sites were encountered.

Trail - If the trail becomes more heavily used, the steep grades below Sassafras Gap will need attention and possibly rerouting. Otherwise, the trail can take more impact without increased maintenance.

Campsites - Both sites can handle heavier loads as they are.

TRAIL 1002

EAGLE CREEK TRAIL - SPENCE FIELD TO PINNACLE CREEK

The Eagle Creek trail is used almost exclusively by backpackers and receives light traffic.

The upper mile or so of the trail runs on very steep grades but, because of relatively low usage, the surface is only slightly eroded. A slight increase in traffic is probably possible here, but the surface will deteriorate rapidly if traffic increases significantly.

Below the intersection with Guano Branch, the trail runs on gentle grades, sticking mostly to old railroad cuts and settler roads. The trail repeatedly crosses Eagle Creek, and there are no bridges. At low water none of the fords are much over knee deep, but the bottoms tend to be rocky and it is necessary to pick one's footing carefully. At high water many of the fords would be treacherous, if not impossible. Aside from some mud at the stream crossings, the lower portion of the trail is in excellent condition, and a substantial increase in foot traffic is possible.

The three maintained campsites are all below carrying capacity and, judging from the numbers of active firepits, it is probably

rare for more than three groups to occupy any of the sites at a given time. Sites 89 and 97 have no signs and 89 could easily be mistaken for an illegal site. Campsite 96 on Eagle Creek Island is on a narrow spit of land between two creeks. It is high enough so it does not flood, but sanitation is poor. With the present low usage levels, sanitation problems are not likely to be serious, but consideration should be given to moving the site if use increases. There are five illegal campsites on the trail, three of which are well established and seem to receive regular use. The high incidence of illegal camping may be due, in part, to the missing signs at Sites 89 and 97. Hikers looking for these sites may pass them by, thinking that they are illegal campsites, and then camp where it is convenient when they find no marked sites futher down the trail. Some of the sites are probably emergency sites used by hikers stopped by high water and off-schedule parties who find going slower than anticipated due to the numerous fords.

Trail - If increased use of the trail is anticipated, the upper mile or so will have to be rerouted onto gentler grades if serious surface erosion is to be prevented. Otherwise, the trail will take increased impact very well.

Campsites - The campsites can take increased use with the exception of 96, which should be moved due to sanitation problems if heavy use is anticipated. Remarking the sites where signs are missing would probably reduce illegal camping.

TRAIL 003

JENKINS RIDGE TRAIL

(Description not written at the time of survey)

This trail is used almost exclusively by backpackers and horse parties. The upper end of the trail runs largely through beech forest and is in good-to-fair condition. There are some problems with water erosion, and bare rock and exposed roots are common. The lower section, which runs largely through oak forest, is in good-to-excellent condition. There is some hog rooting along the trail, which is disturbing the edges.

The trail is generally narrow, with the tread rarely exceeding 60 centimeters. More traffic could be absorbed if maintenance at the upper end were intensified slightly. The campsite at Haw Gap is too close to Spence Field and accumulates problems, such as bears. Adding a site further down the ridge would attract hikers. Adding a small site near Pickens Gap would be possible and might help distribute traffic through the area.

Trail - Increase traffic, with increase in maintenance at the upper end.

Campsite - Add site near the lower end; review Haw Gap.

TRAIL 1004

LAKE TRAIL -

EAGLE CREEK TO PICKENS GAP

(Description not written at the time of the survey)

This trail is used almost exclusively by backpackers and horse parties. The upper end of the trail near Pickens Gap is a former jeep road which is in good condition. As the trail continues into Eagle Creek, it narrows to a total width of a meter or less. There is some mud on the lower end, but the trail is otherwise in good condition. A slight increase in horse use is possible, and a strong increase in foot use.

There is camping available at the lower end of the trail, but nothing is available at the upper end. Campsite distribution should be investigated as a method of increasing traffic.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Addition near upper end or on nearby trail.

TRAIL 1005

THE LAKE TRAIL - HAZEL CREEK TO JENKINS RIDGE

This trail is lightly used by backpackers and horse parties. It is on an old jeep road which has partially revegetated. The trail is in good-to-fair condition.

The only problem is water erosion on the steeper sections. There are a few small ruts. The trail needs a slight increase in maintenance and can absorb more foot and horse traffic in any case. The increase in foot traffic could be substantial and cause little damage.

The only campsite found on this section was the illegal camp at the intersection with the Jenkins Ridge Trail coming down the shoulder from Spence Field. Adding a legal campsite somewhere near the gap might draw more traffic into the area. Because of the large number of camps on Hazel Creek, any additional sites in the area should be small and be planned for backpackers rather than horsemen or fishermen.

Trail - Increase use; improve maintenance slightly.

Campsites - A site could be added some distance from Hazel Creek.

TRAIL 1006

UPPER HAZEL CREEK TRAIL - CLINGMANS DOME TO BONE VALLEY

This trail is used primarily by backpackers. It is designated as a horse trail for most of its length, but no horse sign was encountered at the time this survey was conducted. The trail is too remote for day hikers. The trail has conveniently spaced campsites and intersects several other trails, including the Appalachian Trail, making it a good backpacker route. Fishing in Hazel Creek attracts fishermen to the area, but these seem to be concentrated on the lower end of the trail, and access is primarily by boat from Lake Fontana.

The upper mile of the trail runs on excessively steep grades and, as a result, is badly eroded. This section should be rerouted. The rest of the trail is in good condition and could certainly absorb increased foot traffic but, until the upper mile is repaired, no increase in use should be encouraged.

All of the three maintained campsites on the trail are well located and in good condition. Sites 80 and 81 appear to receive a moderate amount of use and are slightly below carrying capacity. Campsite 83 appears to be more heavily used and is at carrying capacity. There are five illegal sites

concentrated along the upper two miles of the trail. Some of these receive regular use, and one has a substantial amount of surface erosion associated with it. There is an adequate number of maintained sites along the trail, and illegal camping should be discouraged.

Trail - If the upper mile of trail were rerouted, the whole trail could absorb an increase in foot traffic.

Campsites - Increase patrol and cleanup for illegal camping along the upper two miles of the trail.

TRAIL 1007

LOWER HAZEL CREEK - BONE VALLEY TO FONTANA LAKE

Traffic patterns on the lower portion of the Hazel Creek Trail differ from those on the upper part of the trail. Backpackers are probably frequent users but, in addition, people with boats (mostly fishermen) can reach the trail from Fontana Lake and fishermen are probably among the most frequent users.

The trail runs on an old jeep road cut and, for the most part, is on gentle grades. There are moderate amounts of exposed rock on the trail, but the surface is fairly smooth and an increase in use is possible.

The four campsites on the trail are all heavily used, but they are well placed and maintained and are holding up well under the impact. All are near their proper carrying capacity. No evidence of illegal camping was encountered along the trail.

Trail - Increase is possible.

Campsites - No change.

TRAIL 1008

BONE VALLEY

The Bone Valley Trail runs along Bone Valley Creek on an old settler road and is maintained for 1.7 miles. Then it ends at an old homesite and cemetery. The trail continues above this point as a little-used manway, but this section was not surveyed.

The trail is well graded and traffic is light, being used largely by fishermen and occasionally by backpackers making side trips.

The trail has no maintained campsites and intersects no other trails. The only attractions are fishing and the old homesite at the end of the trail.

The trail is muddy in places and shows evidence of surface erosion but could still absorb more foot traffic.

There is a low-use illegal site at the upper end of the trail which has potential for development as a maintained site. This would stimulate backpacker use and reduce the burden on Campsite 83.

The old cabin at the end of the trail is unsafe and should probably be posted as such or removed.

Trail - Increase foot use.

Campsites - Addition possible.

TRAIL 1010

WELCH RIDGE TRAIL

This trail is used primarily by backpackers and horse parties. It gives access to one scenic lookout, and High Rocks Firetower, but is too far from a public road to be attractive to day hikers. The trail is in good-to-fair condition.

This trail has been disturbed by wild boars, who have caused some bank erosion. The most serious problem is moderate water erosion on some of the steeper sections. Locally there are small areas of bank erosion. Under present usage, an increase in maintenance could probably keep the trail in good condition. The trail can absorb an increase in foot traffic.

No legal campsites have been established on Welch Ridge, although there are a few small illegal camps in the gaps. Water is available at a few places on or near the trail, so it would probably be possible to establish one or two small sites for backpackers.

Trail - Increase maintenance slightly and increase backpacker use.

Campsites - One or two small sites could be added if suitable places are found. There is a good spring about a mile north of the tower.

TRAIL 1011

COLD SPRING BRANCH - WELCH RIDGE TO HAZEL CREEK

This trail is used by horse parties, backpackers, and fishermen. The trail is wide and much of it is in poor condition. At the higher elevations the trail is on steep grades close to the stream bank. It is rutted, stony, and badly eroded by water. Most of the stream crossings are muddy and horse plowed. Several long stretches have been washed to bare rock by the stream. Where the trail is away from the stream, on gentle grade, it is in better condition and is easier walking.

The present route of the trail was poorly planned and makes the trail extremely difficult to maintain in fair-to-good condition. The position and maintenance of this trail need to be reviewed. The upper end might be better abandoned and rerouted.

There are no legal campsites on the trail and little indication of illegal camping. Because of trail conditions, an increase in horse parties should be discouraged. This trail links Hazel Creek Jeep Road with Welch Ridge; both trails are capable of absorbing more foot traffic. Some rearrangement of the campsites might help draw foot travelers into the area, but this creek-side trail is presently a limiting section to an increase in use.

Trail - Review trail position and maintenance to try to alleviate erosion.

Campsites - No change until trail problems are solved.

TRAIL 1012

HIGH ROCKS TOWER TRAIL

This short spur trail leads to an old fire tower which offers spectacular views of Lake Fontana and the mountains. The trail is too inaccessible for day-hiker use and is used primarily as a side trip by backpackers hiking Welch Ridge. Although the trail is designated for foot use only, much horse sign was encountered on the trail.

The trail was originally cut to jeep width but has grown in, so that the tread averages about 70 centimeters in width. Despite the steep grade of the trail, only minor amounts of surface and bank erosion were evident. There was also some horse plowing and a small amount of mud. The trail could take increased impact.

A small flat area under the tower, large enough for one small tent, has been used in the past, but this is not a suitable site and is probably rarely used. The old ranger cabin next to the tower has been broken into and appears to be used for camping, but the frequency of use is difficult to determine. There is no water and nearly no flat ground in the tower area, and it does not provide much potential for camping.

Trail - Increase is possible.

Campsites - None. Discourage use of abandoned ranger cabin.

TRAIL 1013

THE LAKE TRAIL - HAZEL CREEK TO FORNEY CREEK

The Lake Trail is a long-distance trail without intersections and is for adventurous backpackers only. It runs parallel to the north shore of Fontana Lake, occasionally within sight of the lake, but mostly on the more distant slopes, so that only occasional tree-clouded views are possible. The major attractions on the trail are the lake and its remoteness. The trail is not well publicized and was purposely left off the park's backcountry trail and campsite map due to problems in the past with people getting lost on it. The trail is blazed and occasionally follows the course of old settler roads, but over most of its length there is no trail cut and it winds randomly cross-country. The trail was blazed with absolutely no regard for proper grading. It cuts straight up and down 15 degree and 20 degree slopes and across much steeper grades, which, without a trail cut, can be extremely wearing on a hiker's feet. Numerous downed trees lie across the route, and it is frequently necessary to climb around these. Hikers planning a trip on this trail should take these facts into account and should not plan on making as much good time as they would on most trails. The trail receives so little use that much of the surface is on nearly pristine forest floor and would be

impossible to follow without the blazes. Even so, the most observant hikers are likely to lose the trail in places and be forced to backtrack. The trail takes numerous unexpected turns, sometimes off of the old settler roads and well-used game trails. In several places, blazes have been lost or obscured by fallen trees and it is necessary to continue on "blind" in hopes of seeing the next blaze. Backtracking is often difficult due to the obscurity of the trail. East of Campsite 75, the trail crosses a draw and the blaze "disappears." A thorough search of the area turned up no other blazes. A well-used boar trail climbs out of the draw to the east and this, being the most logical route, was followed. The trail soon dissipated and was lost. Later, it was discovered that the trail runs south down the draw for a short distance before turning east along the lake shore.

The only erosion problems on the trail occur on the first mile or so east of Hazel Creek where it follows an old settler road. The surface here is badly rutted and rocky. Aside from this section, the trail has no surface erosion and, for the most part, is covered in leaf litter and vegetation. There is extensive hog-rooting and wallowing activity along the trail, which is causing some bank erosion in places.

All of the four maintained campsites on the trail are small low-use sites. The site at Chambers Creek is below carrying capacity. The sites at Pilkey Creek, Hicks Branch, and Kirkland Creek are all poorly located on steep grades wihout any flat areas to pitch a tent so, despite low usage, they should not be expected to take any increased camper load. None of the sites would be suitable for more than two or three tents. Extensive hog rooting around Pilkey Creek, Hicks Branch, and Kirkland Creek has resulted in some bank erosion, and the water sources at these sites may be used as hog wallows. Only one small illegal site was encountered on the trail.

Trail - The present status of the trail makes it unsuitable for even light traffic loads. The areas on steep grades and those where there is no trail cut would begin to erode as soon as the vegetation on the tread was destroyed. The trail should certainly not be publicized nor put on the park's back-country map until it is re-marked to conform with park standards. If the trail is to remain open with its present status as a primitive trail, it should be re-blazed, with attention being given to marking all difficult turns where a hiker would be

likely to wander off the route. The trees which have fallen across the route should also be removed. Hikers requesting camping permits for sites on the trail should be warned about its condition. If the trail is re-marked and brought up to standard, it will provide an excellent long-distance hiker route.

Campsites - The four campsites are concentrated in the center of the trail, and the eastern and western sections have no camping facilities. Campsite 76, which is presently unsuitable for camping due to steep grades, should be closed and moved west to the head of White Side Creek or some other suitable location. Campsite 75 on Kirkland Creek is also poorly located on a steep slope, but the road cut for old Highway 129 is located just above the site and would provide an excellent location for camping. With these changes, the campsites will easily be able to absorb the present hiker load, but if the trail is re-marked and publicized, the entire system will have to be redone to take the increased load.

SECTION 11 - FORNEY CREEK

TRAIL 1101

JUMP UP RIDGE TRAIL-

FORNEY CREEK TO WELCH RIDGE

This trail is exclusively a backpacker and horse-camper trail, being too inaccessible for day hikes. The trail runs on a long abandoned jeep trail which has grown in with vegetation, leaving a narrow trail-width tread. The trail gets only light use, primarily due to the fact that a backpacker or horse camper wishing to use this trail must climb 11 miles over a steep ridge to get from Campsite 73 on Forney Creek to the next nearest campsite on Hazel Creek.

The surface of the trail is somewhat rocky but relatively smooth, so footing is not difficult. Some bank erosion is present on the steeper cuts and becomes extensive on the last mile before the intersection with the Welch Ridge trail. This upper section also has some ruts and more extensive surface erosion. The trail is, generally, in good condition and could take the increased impact of more foot use.

There are no legal campsites along the trail, but there is a regularly used illegal site at Poplar Flats about 3 miles up the trail. The site is well located and could easily be established as a maintained site. The trail can take the

the increased backpacker use which a site here would stimulate but more maintenance, at least on the upper mile of trail, would be desirable if this is done.

Trail - Increase foot use. Water bars and ditches are needed on the upper mile of trail.

Campsites - Establish new site at Poplar Flats.

TRAIL 1102

FORNEY CREEK TRAIL - FORNEY RIDGE TO BEE GUM BRANCH

This trail is primarily used by backpackers. The condition of the trail varies from poor-to-good. The upper end of the trail, predominantly in a spruce-fir forest, shows evidence of water erosion, along with bare rock and tree roots. The trail follows an old logging railroad bed at the lower end where surface conditions improve. However, there are still some other areas of extensive water erosion along with exposed rock. Once on the flats along Forney Creek below Campsite 70, the trail is very level but has a few washouts.

By far the worst problem on upper Forney Creek Trail is illegal camping. The first illegal site looks like a legal site and is frequently mistaken for one. There are a half-dozen large illegals in this area. The whole watershed needs better patrol and a general cleanup. Steel Trap, Site 69, has been over-assigned to hikers, many of whom do not realize how far downhill it is from Clingmans Dome Road. Better marking of the legal site and putting "No Camping" signs in the illegal camps may help.

Trail - Stabilize use; some increase in maintenance desirable, especially control of water erosion.

Campsites - Clean up illegal camping problems; add no more sites; reduce use.

TRAILS 1102 AND 1103

FORNEY CREEK TRAIL - HORSE CUTOFFS

The Forney Creek Trail has a number of recently constructed reroutes around dangerous fords. Although the rerouting was a good idea, it has not been very effective. Several of the reroutes are not marked, and some people may end up fording anyway. Many of the climbs up on the slope above the creek are very steep. Water erosion, mud and exposed roots have created problems. The trail cut is narrow and uneven, and horses tend to step off the edge. Shallow ruts have already formed in a few places. Maintenance will have to be regular to keep these cutoffs in good condition, and signs are needed in a few places. Some of them, like many new trails, could have been better routed.

Trail - Maintenance necessary.

Campsites - Obviously no additions.

TRAIL 1103

LOWER FORNEY CREEK TRAIL - BEE GUM BRANCH TO LAKE FONTANA

This trail is used by backpackers and horse parties, being too isolated for any significant amount of day hiker traffic. Horse use is permitted only between Bee Gum Branch and the Bear Creek trail, but some horse signs were seen on this section of the trail, indicating minimal horse use. Attractions include ample camping facilities, fishing, and Lake Fontana. Fishermen are regular users. It is possible to reach the trail from Lake Fontana by privately-owned boat, and day-trip the lower part of the trail, but overnight use is more common.

The trail runs along an old jeep trail or logging grade, but the cut has grown to the point where the tread is of foot trail width (mostly under 120 centimeters). The surface is in very good condition except for some areas with exposed rock and mud. It could take more impact throughout its length. In two locations, trails which bypass difficult fords have been cut into the slopes above Forney Creek. These were probably initially constructed primarily for horse use, but many hikers take these slightly longer routes in preference to fording the creek.

There are three heavily used campsites (71, 73, and 74) and one moderately used site (72) on the trail. Low use at Campsite 72 results, at least in part, from its unappealing location. It is located on the road cut, which is only 5 meters in width, and is hemmed in by steep slopes on either side. It has only three active fire pits and has the appearance of an illegal site, so that a hiker looking for the site is likely to bypass it. The area could support considerable impact but, due to its unappealing location, hikers are likely to continue to avoid the site. The three other sites are all reaching the limit of their carrying capacity. Trash levels are uniformly high, and firewood levels are low. The sites tend to be dirty and have moderate-to-heavy levels of vegetation damage. Campsite 73 is located on a low rise between two creeks, causing all the runoff from the site to flow directly into water sources. This condition results in poor sanitation.

The trail is in good shape and able to take increased impact but, due to the marginal condition of most of the campsites, any substantial increase in use will necessitate a review of camping facilities in the area. Poor sanitation at Campsite 73 should be investigated. It may be wise to close or remove the site.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - Stabilize use.

TRAIL 1104

TRAIL FROM CLINGMANS DOME TO ANDREWS BALD

This trail is very heavily used by day hikers and backpackers.

The trail is heavily eroded and in poor condition throughout. Much of the trail near Clingmans Dome is worn to bedrock and is very stony. On the flatter sections of the ridge top (in the fir forest), there are several muddy areas and numerous ruts and exposed tree roots. The trail is widened to about 2 meters through much of the central section.

The trail is past the point of easy repair and would probably have to be completely rerouted in order to improve conditions substantially.

Andrews Bald is close enough to the road to be frequently used for illegal camping. A brief search of the bald produced four illegal sites, and there may be more around the periphery of the bald, away from the trail. The area has long had an illegal camping problem and needs regular patrol.

Adding legal camping in the section near Clingmans Dome would only add use and is not recommended.

Trail - Increased maintenance; stabilize or reduce traffic.

Campsites - Add no sites, and increase patrol.

TRAIL 1104

FORNEY RIDGE TRAIL -

ANDREWS BALD TO SPRING HOUSE BRANCH INTERSECTION

After Andrews Bald, the day-hiking traffic decreases to almost nothing. Trail conditions improve as the trail passes along Forney Ridge. This section is in good-to-excellent condition and can sustain more foot traffic. There are slight problems with bank erosion.

There are no legal campsites in this section. The illegal site at Broad Camp Gap is so large it could easily be converted to a maintained site. There is no water within a quarter of a mile on Spring House Branch Trail. Increased backpacker traffic would have little impact on this section of trail.

Trail - Increase trail use.

Campsites - Add a site near the Spring House Branch intersection.

TRAIL 1105

BEE GUM BRANCH -

FORNEY RIDGE TO FORNEY CREEK

(Description not written at the time of the survey)

This trail is used primarily by backpackers and an occasional horse party. The trail is in good-to-excellent condition. Most types of erosion are rare, except for some bank and side erosion at the lower end. The trail can take an increase in foot traffic with no difficulty.

There is illegal camping near the intersection with Forney Ridge, and adding a small campsite might be considered for drawing traffic out of the Forney and Noland Creek areas. This would require careful spacing and control to avoid bear problems and misuse.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsite - Addition possible; depends on planning for the area.

TRAIL 1108

SPRINGHOUSE BRANCH TRAIL - FORNEY RIDGE TO NOLAND CREEK

This trail is used by backpackers, fishermen, and horses. The upper end of the trail is in good condition; the lower end has been used by vehicles and is in fair condition. There were vehicle ruts and water erosion on the lower end. With a slight change in maintenance, the trails could take an increase in backpacker traffic.

There are a number of small illegal campsites at the lower end, despite the presence of a large well maintained campsite at the intersection with Noland Jeep Road. The area could support more backpacker traffic but needs better patrol.

Trail - Increase backpacker use.

Campsites - Site could be added upstream from the horse camp.

TRAIL 1109

UPPER NOLAND CREEK TRAIL

NOLAND DIVIDE TO SPRINGHOUSE BRANCH INTERSECTION

(Description not written at the time of the survey)

This trail is used primarily by backpackers and horse parties. The trail has a wide cut and is jeep width at the bottom. It is generally in fair-to-poor condition. At the upper end there was evidence of water erosion that had exposed bare rock. Exposed roots, mud, and water erosion are occasional problems throughout its length. Increased maintenance would help with some of the problems, but a decrease in use on the steep upper portion would also be desirable. Much of the rest of the trail is at carrying capacity.

The campsites on the upper end of Noland Creek are heavily used relative to the topography. The site at Bald Creek is muddy and needs a reduction in use. Upper Noland, Site 62, is in better condition, but a decrease would be desirable. Site 63 is probably at about its proper carrying capacity. There is also some illegal use in this area. No more campsites are needed, and use of the upper ones should be curtailed or have improved maintenance.

Trail - Increase maintenance; decrease use.

Campsites - Increase maintenance; decrease use.

TRAIL 1110

LOWER NOLAND CREEK JEEP ROAD

This road is used by horse parties, fishermen, backpacker and day hikers. The road is intensively maintained and is in good condition. There is some water erosion and a small amount of bank erosion. Both present only minor problems under present maintenance. The road can take a tremendous amount of impact from foot traffic and is underused by foot travelers. The area can also absorb more horse parties, the only limitation being available camping space. Campsite 64 is larger and could absorb more backpackers and small horse parties. The trail needs a better marked access trail from the bridge near Noland Tunnel.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Increase use slightly.

TRAIL 1111

HORSE TRAIL - WELCH RIDGE

TO FORNEY CREEK YANU BRANCH TRAIL

This trail is used almost exclusively by backpacker, horse parties, and fishermen. The trail is in good-to-fair condition.

The upper end of the trail is hog rooted and shows evidence of some bank erosion. There are a few muddy spots and some water erosion on the steeper sections.

In general, the trail is well graded and should be able to sustain an increase in foot traffic. A great increase in horse traffic would probably cause rutting and increased bank erosion. Some increase in maintenance would prevent water erosion on the switchbacks.

There is some illegal camping at present, and a legal site could be established on the creek flats of Yanu Branch or Jonas Creek.

Trail - Increase in backpacker use possible.

Campsites - Site could be added.

TRAIL 1112

LAKE TRAIL

FORNEY CREEK TO GOLDMINE BRANCH TO NOLAND TUNNEL

Although this trail is used primarily by horse parties, backpackers, and fishermen, it is close enough to the road to provide opportunities for day hikers. The trail is relatively new and is in good-to-fair condition. In a number of places the trail runs along the ridge top or has a slope of greater than 10 degrees. These sections are likely to erode under increased use and may limit the traffic the trail can sustain.

The first section of trail near Forney Creek has both muddy areas and water erosion, and needs increased maintenance. As the trail begins to run perpendicular to the slope, its condition improves. There is some water erosion evident near stream crossings and in the steeper sections. The trail between the intersection with the horse trail cutoff and Noland Tunnel (the section looping down to Goldmine Branch) is in somewhat better condition than the other section despite relatively steep slopes and, presumably, receives less use. Some of the steeper parts of this trail are already beginning to rut, and increased maintenance is needed. Some sections of the trail should probably be relocated.

The legal campsite on the lake is small because of the limitations of the slope; however, it is close to carrying capacity. Another site could be established in the old homesite area on Hyatt Branch, but this does not seem necessary with present visitor load.

Trail - Increase in foot use possible with slight increase in maintenance.

Campsites - No sites added; stabilize use, unless Lake Trail completed.

TRAIL 1113

THE CUTOFF FROM NOLAND TUNNEL TO THE LAKE TRAIL

This trail is not shown on the backcountry map or the topograph maps for the park. It also has no trail signs, but it is clearly maintained. The trail is in good to fair condition.

The trail is narrow and runs along the ridge top for much of its length. It is beginning to rut in some of the steeper sections where it runs with the slope. Side erosion is prevalent in the narrower sections cut into the slope. Under light use the trail will probably remain in good condition. Should use be increased very much, some sections should be widened, and some of the sections that run with the slope should be rerouted.

No definite evidence of camping was found, but there were light trails and trampled areas on one ridge shoulder (poacher use?). The trail is too close to the road and the slopes are too steep for a camping increase.

Trail - No heavy increase, especially horse use.

Campsites - No additions.

SECTION 12 - DEEP CREEK

TRAILS 1201, 1202, 1203, AND 1204

DEEP CREEK TRAIL

This is a long trail and patterns of use vary substantially along its length. The first two miles above Deep Creek are on a recently abandoned graveled road. It is well graded and shows no evidence of severe erosion, but is rather wide. Day hiker traffic is very heavy here, with the water falls and swimming in Deep Creek being major attractions. This is also one of the park's most popular "tubing" areas and while walking the lower part of this trail on a warm summer day, one encounters a constant stream of people carrying inner tubes.

The middle section of the trail runs along Deep Creek on an old jeep trail. There are numerous campsites along the trail and, in season, fishing parties are the heaviest users. The campsite at Bryson Place is provided with facilities for horses, and use by horse parties is heavy. Use by backpackers is also relatively heavy, because of ample camping facilities and easy access. Most of this section is above carrying capacity or nearing the upper limit of its carrying capacity. There are numerous horse plowed mudholes on the flats where the trail follows the river, and surface erosion

is of moderate extent throughout. In one spot, an old bank slide obliterated about 25 meters of trail. The trail has been rerouted around the slide, but the old trail has not been closed and there are no signs to indicate which is the proper route. Consequently, much of the traffic still takes the old route over the slide, where footing is difficult and where use hampers recovery of the area.

There are six maintained campsites along this section of trail. These high-density campsites are maintained to accommodate the large numbers of fishermen who use Deep Creek. Four of these sites (56, 58, 59, and 60) are relatively small and well contained and are at their proper carrying capacity. Campsite 55, at the Pole Road intersection, and 57, at Bryson Place, are larger, heavier use sites and vegetation damage is greater.

Trail - Stablilize use.

Campsites - Change density; reduce number.

TRAIL 1205

POLE ROAD -

SASSAFRAS GAP TO DEEP CREEK TRAIL

(Description not written at the time of the survey)

This trail is primarily used by backpackers and an occasional horse party. The trail is in good-to-excellent condition. It has very small amounts of mud, bare rock, and exposed roots. The trail can definitely support an increase in foot traffic without further damage. The trail is steep for adding campsites, but water is available and a small site could be located.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Addition possible, depending on planning for area.

TRAILS 1207, 1208, AND 1209

NOLAND DIVIDE TRAIL - CLINGMANS DOME TO DEEP CREEK

The upper end of the trail is largely used by backpackers. The lower end (last 3 miles) is frequently used by day hikers who are interested in the vistas from Beaugard Ridge. The trail starts on a jeep road which is in good-to-fair condition. The area is subject to water erosion and runs with the slope through spruce fir forest. There are substantial areas of mud, ruts, and exposed roots. The middle section of the trail is in good to excellent condition. Although both the upper and lower sections probably have similar levels of use, however, the lower section is in drier forest and is better placed on the slope.

The trail to Upper Sassafras Gap can tolerate an increase in hiker use, but the upper end is likely to be further damaged. The end of the trail near Deep Creek has minor erosion due to water and, in a few places due to visitor use. There are two extensive guffer reroutes below the vista on Beaugard Ridge.

Noland Divide Trail had a number of small illegal campsites. The trail could tolerate increased backpacker use and the addition of a legal campsite. (Cold Spring on Coburn Knob has a flat area and water; it would make a good campsite.)

The whole system, except the section in spruce-fir, could absorb more traffic.

Trail - Increase use on lower end.

Campsites - Add sites.

TRAIL 1210

INDIAN CREEK ROAD -

DEEP CREEK TO INTERSECTION WITH MARTINS GAP TRAIL

This road is used by day hikers, backpackers, and horses.

The lower end has two nice waterfalls and some old homesites.

The road is in good condition throughout and has been extensively maintained. It can take a heavy increase in all types of traffic.

There are no legal campsites on this route and also, surprisingly, little evidence of illegal camping. A number of the old homesites, particularly the semi-open area near Queen Cemetary, would make fine camping areas for backpackers and can probably take considerable impact. Backpacker use in this section can both be increased and encouraged. There are several possible loops from this road (over to Deep Creek, Sunkota Ridge, or Thomas Divide) which would make good safe overnight trips for beginning backpackers.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Add at least one site, probably in the old homesite.

TRAIL 1211

SUNKOTA RIDGE TRAIL

This trail is lightly used, probably largely by day hikers.

The trail is in excellent-to-good condition. Some of it runs on steep slopes and probably should be rerouted before major traffic is encouraged. The trail could take more use just to keep it open. There are no campsites along it and also no water. There are some gaps large enough to support a small campsite, but water would have to be brought in.

Trail - Increase foot use, with slight increase in maintenance.

Campsites - Could add small sites.

TRAIL 1206

FORK RIDGE TRAIL -

CLINGMANS DOME ROAD TO POKE PATCH CAMPGROUND

This trail seems to receive considerable use by overnight campers as an access route to the Mount Collins Shelter. Due to the distance to the Deep Creek campground area, day hikers use of the trail is inhibited. No horse traffic was noted.

The trail, in general, is in good condition for the lower two-thirds toward Deep Creek. Only isolated areas of moderate erosion occur in this section. However, the upper third of the trail, the spruce-fir forest type, is in very poor condition due to excessive water which has created a large number of extensively eroded stretches and large mudholes. Increased maintenance would improve the upper end.

Only one campsite, an illegal one adjacent to the Poke Patch campsite, was noted on this 5-mile trail. The illegal campsite is under frequent use and obviously serves as an overflow outlet to nearby Poke Patch. Considering the presence of eight established campsites already along Deep Creek, development of this site as a legal one is not recommended. The trail itself is not long enough to warrant a campsite along the route.

Trail - Near carrying capacity; increase maintenance.

Campsites - No development recommended.

TRAILS 1212 AND 1213

BRYSON PLACE TRAIL TO NEWTON BALD VIA MARTINS GAP

This 7-mile stretch of trail can be segregated into two use categories. First, the 1.5 miles between Bryson Place and Martins Gap has moderate use by backpackers and horses. This trail serves as the main connecting route between the heavily-used Deep Creek and Indian Creek Trails and is, therefore, not used much by day hikers. Aside from the moderate water erosion at the Bryson Place entering point, the trail is in good shape and could receive increased use without reducing its quality. No campsites were noted and none are needed due to the proximity to the Deep Creek campgrounds.

The second section, extending from Martins Gap to Newton Bald, is under limited use by hearty backpackers and a few horsemen, probably resulting directly from the combination of limited water and the presence of only one campsite in the entire Thomas Divide region. Scenic views and isolation are, however, major attractions. Little to no erosion is present on the trail and substantially increased use would not adversely affect the trail quality.

The Newton Bald campsite is the only campsite on the Thomas Divide, with isolation and ridge top views as main attractions.

Although the campsite is central to five trails converging from the periphery of Thomas Divide, the limited water supply and relatively steep trail to the summit restrict the use of the campsite, which is in fairly good condition.

The carrying capacity of the trail is restricted by local vegetation and soil as much as by the scarcity of water. The trail generally follows the ridge top and any new campsite development would be possible, but limited, due to the presence of springs.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Add.

TRAIL

INDIAN CREEK TRAIL TO MARTINS GAP

This trail is probably used more by day hikers and horses than by backpackers.

The trail is in good-to-excellent condition and has very few erosion problems. There is little side erosion and, despite the steep slopes, almost no evidence of water erosion.

There was one small, old, illegal camp, rarely used, and some evidence of camping at Martins Gap, but probably not used frequently. The trail can take an increase in foot use, but there are few good sites on the trail. Adding campsites on the Indian Creek side might draw more backpacker traffic over the trail.

Trail - Allow increase in foot use.

Campsites - Do not add site on this trail; add on adjoining trails.

TRAILS 1214 AND 1215

THOMAS DIVIDE TRAIL - NEWFOUND GAP ROAD TO NEWTON BALD INTERSECTION

This section of the Thomas Divide Trail is primarily used by backpackers and day hikers, with little or no horse usage. Although the ridge top offers a number of splendid views and stands of mature forest, the foot traffic is light, probably because of the lack of designated backcountry campsites and a scarcity of water sources. Erosion is minimal and, except for a few sections of limited hog rooting damage, the trail is in good-to-excellent condition.

With increased use, or through publicity of the Thomas Divide region by the park to relieve congestion in other areas, new backcountry campsites will need to be developed.

Trail - Excellent condition; significantly increased foot traffic without deterioration.

Campsites - Addition of sites possible, perhaps near Neetle Creek Bald.

TRAIL 1218

GEORGES CREEK TRAIL TO DEEPLOW GAP

Once a heavily-used jeep trail, this route is now used by backpackers, day hikers, and horsemen, although to a limited extent in each case. The most probable reason for use is as an access route to or from the Deeplow Gap intersection and to the Little Creek Falls area, which is a major attraction here.

Although use is moderate, the extent of erosion on most of the trail (particularly at the lower elevations) is extreme. Vehicle ruts, slope, and numerous springs and small creeks combine to create erosion problems without the additional impact of trail users. The last one-half mile of the trail near Deeplow Gap passes through sub-xeric oak forest-heath and is in excellent condition. If any increased use or continued use is expected, then considerable maintenance will be required.

No campsites are located on the route or in the region, and a campsite may be necessary with increased use, possibly located at or near Deeplow Gap.

Trail - Considerable maintenance recommended.

Campsites - With increased use, development of a new campsite is possible.

TRAIL 1219

MINGUS CREEK TRAIL - MINGUS MILL TO DEEPLOW GAP

The initial three to four miles of the Mingus Creek Trail is a combination of jeep and foot trail, used primarily by day hikers and, to a lesser extent, by backpackers. No horse use was noted. Rich Cove forest type and a scenic creek are perhaps the main attractions. This stretch, which follows Mingus Creek and Madcap Branch, has a considerable length of highly eroded areas caused by seepages and side branches flowing through the trail. Increased maintenance is definitely recommended, particularly if day hiker use increases.

The second section of this trail continues three to four miles to Little Creek Falls and comes under considerably less use. The trail is in good to excellent condition until it reaches the Cove forest along Cooper Creek, where the water erosion has damaged the trail to the point where increased maintenance will be necessary. The Little Creek Falls trail receives moderate use, primarily from day hikers, with access from the Cooper Creek Road; consequently, the trail is nearly at its carrying capacity and increased use without maintenance would definitely result in deterioration of the trail.

The cove, surrounding Cooper Creek northwest of the Little Creek Falls Trail intersection, would be an ideal location for a backcountry campsite.

Trail - Sections of trail along Mingus, Madcap, and Cooper Creeks in need of maintenance.

Campsites - Possible site for backcountry campsite in upper section of Cooper Creek Cove.

TRAIL 1221

TRAIL FROM MINGUS CREEK INTERSECTION TO NEWTON BALD

This trail is lightly used by backpackers, day hikers, and horsemen.

The trail is in excellent condition with little evidence of erosion. An increase in use would probably be beneficial.

Trail - Increase use.

Campsites - Add.

TRAIL 1222

KANATI FORK TRAIL

This trail, which provides access to the middle of the Thomas Divide Trail from Newfound Gap Road, is used sparingly by day hikers, backpackers, horsemen. Accordingly, the trail is in good-to-excellent condition over the three-mile stretch, except for several isolated eroded areas where small streams dissect the trail. Otherwise, erosion is minimal. Use of the trail is predominantly for access to Thomas Divide, and possibly the well-developed cove forest type serves as a major attraction.

No campsites, legal or illegal, were noted and none will be needed.

Trail - Increase foot traffic.

Campsites - No campsite development recommended.

TRAIL 1223

THE NEWTON BALD TRAIL

This trail is lightly used by backpackers, day hikers, and horsemen. The sole campsite is situated five miles in at the top of the bald and has no water. Since it is an additional seven miles to the first site with water, hikers generally avoid the area. The trail is in good condition except for a few mudholes and streams running through the path. Erosion is minimal.

One illegal site is located on the bald at the junction with the Mingus Creek Trail and is probably used only in emergencies.

Additional campsites should be added in the Lower Thomas Divide area. This, together with increased publicity, would serve to draw people away from more heavily trafficked trails and onto lightly used trails such as Newton Bald.

Trail - Increase foot traffic.

Campsites - No change on the trail, but new sites should be created in the area.

THOMAS DIVIDE TRAIL -

NEWTON BALD TRAIL TO INDIAN CREEK

This segment of the Thomas Divide Trail has very little traffic, being used predominantly by backpackers and, to a lesser degree, by horsemen. Due to the length and location of the trail, day hiker use is minimal. Isolation and scenic ridge top views are the main attractions.

Although the first segment of the trail from Indian Creek to the first contact with the ridge has some isolated points of severe erosion, the entire length of trail following Thomas Ridge is rated as excellent in the erosion and overall categories. In fact, increased use would help keep the trail in better condition as a dense vegetation, herb, and shrub layer cover the trail in places, and fallen trees over the trail have not been removed for some time. Increased use of the trail in both directions from Deeplow Gap would be easily accommodated without serious deterioration.

Trail - Significant increase in use possible without deterioration.

Campsites - Possible addition of small sites near water sources.

TRAILS 1224, 1225, AND 1226

HORSE CUTOFF PARALLELING DEEP CREEK TRAIL AND TRAILS ABOVE DEEP CREEK CAMPGROUND

These trails receive a variety of users, including horse parties, day hikers, and park maintenance vehicles. The system is variable in maintenance. Some sections are jeep width, some are trail width, some are surfaced, and some are not. With the abandonment of Deep Creek Road, some of the trail width has become unnecessary.

The trails are in fair to good condition. Most of the turns and intersections are not marked. Water erosion and bank erosion are both moderate problems. Since the trails are used by jeeps, there are some vehicle ruts. More foot use will probably not increase erosion greatly. There is some horse damage, and a heavy increase in horse use might cause further problems. Unless the trail access in the area is modified, however, an increase in horse use is unlikely.

There was no evidence of camping, and most of the trails are too close to the Deep Creek campground to add any sites.

Trail - Stabilize use; abandon unnecessary spurs.

Campsites - No additional sites.

TRAIL 1227

ABANDONED MOTOR NATURE TRAIL

This road is used by occasional day hikers, backpackers, and horse parties. The road was bulldozed and then abandoned. It is in good-to-fair condition. In most places, water and bank erosion have not been controlled, as the status of the route is confused. It is close to Thomas Divide and duplicates that trail. It makes an easy-to-follow day hike loop to Indian Creek.

It could take an increase in use.

Trail - Increase possible, if maintained.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1229

LOWER DEEP CREEK TRAIL - INDIAN CREEK LOOP

This short stretch of trail connects Deep Creek to Indian Creek and is most heavily used by day hikers.

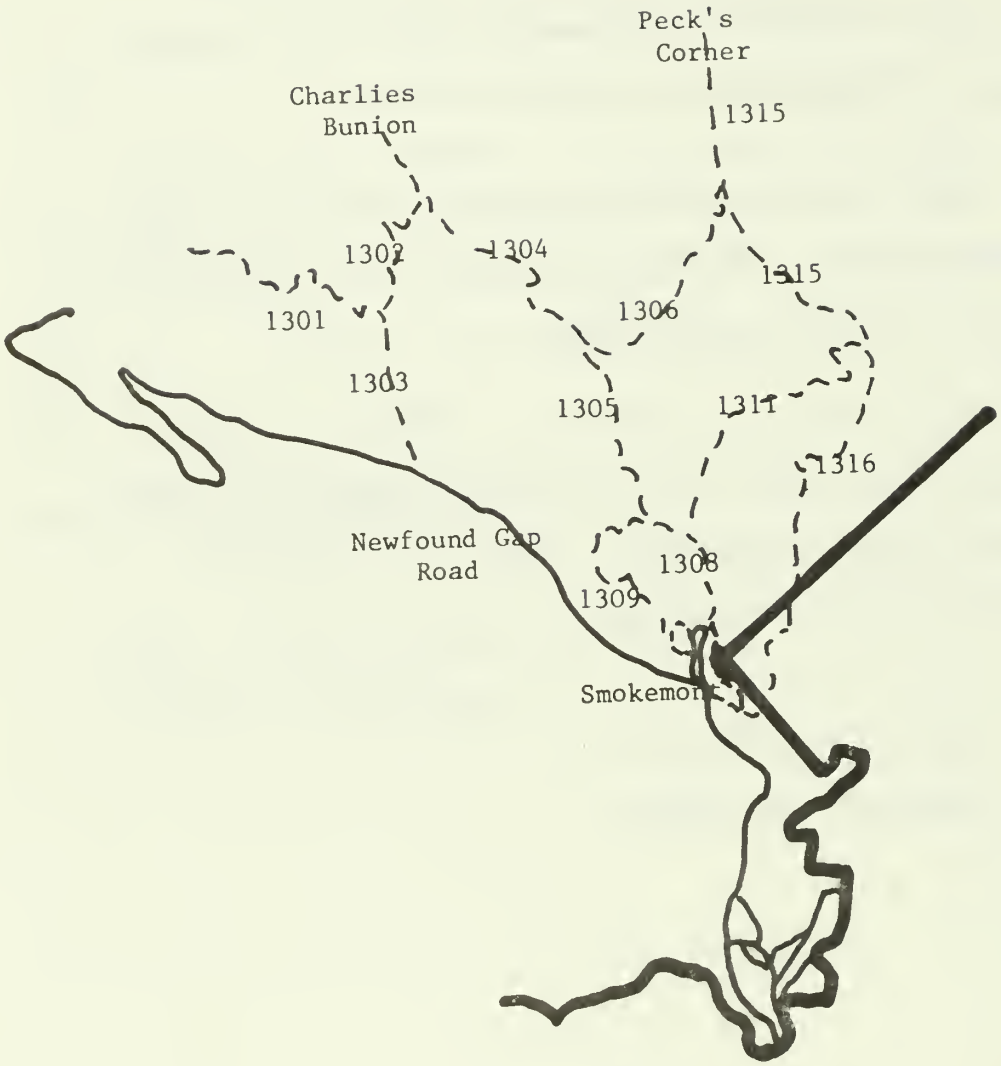
The trail is in fair condition. Water erosion is the most serious problem. The trail has water bars, and these should be kept clear and in good repair.

The trail is short, and there was no evidence of illegal camping. The trail is too close to the campground at Deep Creek to establish campsites. The trail is presently carrying enough foot traffic.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - No changes.

SECTION 13 - SMOKEMONT



TRAIL 1301

SWEAT HEIFER TRAIL FROM THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL TO KEPHART PRONG

This trail is moderately used by backpackers and lightly used by day hikers. The first mile, through spruce-fir, has water eroded stretches, bare rock, and some ruts. An increase in maintenance would help. The lower end of the trail is in fair-to-good condition.

No illegal campsites were encountered, and the slopes are too steep to consider legal additions. More day hiker use could probably be absorbed with increased maintenance and since the route has easy access.

Trail - Increase maintenance and day hiker use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1302 AND 1303

KEPHART PRONG TRAIL

The trail is moderately used by backpackers and day hikers. Kephart Prong Shelter is located two miles from Newfound Gap Road but draws most of its users from the Appalachian Trail, three to five miles above it.

The first mile and a half is a graveled jeep road in fair to poor condition, with considerable water erosion. Around the shelter, water and bank erosion are severe. The upper end of the trail is in better condition. The grade is moderate to steep but, if there were a change in maintenance, use could continue at present levels. The last mile is somewhat open and grassy and in good condition.

Kephart Prong Shelter is the only legal site and should remain as such, as there are no suitable areas on the trail, either above or below it. There is a new roof and wire on the bunks, but no privy. A decrease is desirable to curb tree damage, which is expanding around the site. One illegal site is located with a half mile of Newfound Gap Road but receives little traffic. There is some additional illegal camping near the road.

Trail - Increased maintenance is essential in trouble spots. The trail is at its carrying capacity and should continue as such.

Campsites - Decrease use at shelter unless hikers stop chopping trees, or ban fires. Check sanitation.

TRAIL 1304

RICHLANDS MOUNTAIN TRAIL - THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL TO BRADLEY FORK

This trail is used primarily by backpackers and horse parties, but there is some additional day hiker use through the big tree stand at the lower end.

The trail is in fair-to-poor condition. The upper end is badly rutted and there are exposed rocks and roots. Water erosion is a constant problem on the section from Kephart Prong intersection down the spruce-fir forest. There are several large eroded areas and mud. Conditions improve on the lower end of the trail, but the surface is still very worn. Increased use, especially horse use, will cause further damage, and control of water erosion is necessary.

The only campsite found was an illegal site near Bradley Prong. The area near the bridge needs better patrol.

Trail - Increase maintenance; stabilize use.

Campsites - Probably no additions.

TRAILS 1305 AND 1308

BRADLEY PRONG TRAIL

This trail is heavily used by day hikers, backpackers, and horse parties. The graveled road follows Bradley Prong closely and has a number of good swimming and fishing holes. There are several campsites, including one large horse camp, that can be reached by Bradley Prong and many people continue on to the Appalachian Trail.

Erosion is slight and will remain low, even with a sizeable increase in traffic, due to the grading and levelness of the trail.

There are several illegal sites. One has developed around a hitch rack half way to the horse camp. If more sites are needed, Bradley Prong would be a good location for a small site. Campsite 50 is large and firewood clear.

Trail - Increase foot, horse traffic, and day hiker use.

Campsites - An addition is possible; it would probably develop bear problems.

TRAIL 1306

TAWYA CREEK TRAIL

This trail is used by backpackers and horses regularly. The top of the trail on Hughes Ridge is one mile from the Appalachian Trail, which is a likely goal for many users of this trail.

Bare rocks and vehicle ruts are present on steeper grades along the upper trail, and rocks exposed by water erosion are not uncommon over most of its length. Control of water erosion is of primary importance.

One illegal campsite was encountered near the trail, and there are at least two more fishing camps some distance off. More frequent patrol would be beneficial.

There are sites suitable for a small legal camp, but stabilizing trail conditions would be desirable before an addition is made.

Trail - Increase maintenance; stabilize use.

Campsites - Addition possible; depends on planning for the area.

TRAIL 1307

CABIN FLATS TRAIL

This one-mile trail dead-ends at Cabin Flats horse camp and is heavily used by horsemen and backpackers.

The trail is wide and graveled, with a few mudholes at stream crossings. Bank erosion along the original cut is still conspicuous but should lessen in the future.

The camp is well situated but overuse is apparent from the number of cut stumps and the distance needed to travel to find firewood.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - Reduce use.

TRAIL 1309

SMOKEMONT LOOP TRAIL

This trail is primarily used by day hikers. It lacks good vistas, however, and has relatively few attractions other than being a quiet walk.

Erosion is minor. There is some evidence of water action on the trail surface (the grades are moderate) and a little bank erosion. The trail can definitely tolerate more foot use. Campsites are not appropriate.

Trail - Increase day hiker use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1310

QUEEN MOUNTAIN TRAIL CONNECTOR

This trail is located less than a mile from Campsite 50 (Lower Chasteen) to the Queen Mountain Trail. It is used mostly by day hikers and horse parties. Although it parallels Bradley Prong Trail and is often within sight of it, this trail has more points of interest. However, it is lightly used because it is not marked and most hikers do not realize it is there.

The only erosion is at the trailhead of the Queen Mountain Trail. Here the trail is widened to greater than one meter, with numerous rocks jutting out of the path. Gravel would improve and protect this final stretch.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1311

CHASTEEN CREEK TRAIL

This trail is moderately used by backpackers and horse parties. It atracts some long-distance day hikers who loop on Hughes Ridge.

The lower end of the trail is a jeep road with evidence of some water erosion, but generally it is in good condition. On the steeper upper trail sections, bare rock is common. There is rutting, both from water erosion and from horse plowing. If the erosion problems on the upper end could be controlled, an increase in foot use would be possible.

The campsite at the head of Trail 50 is heavily used and probably needs a reduction in visitation. The site farther up the creek should also have its use controlled.

Trail - Increase in foot use possible, especially day hiking, with an increase in maintenance.

Campsites - Limit use at present sites.

TRAIL 1312

SMOKEMONT NATURE TRAIL

The nature trail is a half-mile loop heavily used by campers at Smokemont as a self-guided introduction to the park. The trail is overused, but less so than most other trails of this type in the park. Rocks and exposed roots are few, but the trail is widened to over 80 centimeters in most places.

Trail - Decrease use and add a few water bars.

Campsites - None

TRAILS 1313 AND 1314

QUEEN MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Day hikers and horsemen are the principle users of this heavily trafficked route. The trail skirts above Smokemont Campground on a steep hillside, and the area is laced with manways cutting up 30 degree slopes. Some sections are firewood clear but few stumps are present in those areas.

The segment closest to the stables is seriously eroded to depths of 50 centimeters. The initial cut was made through a sandbank, however, gravel is needed to slow the erosion.

There is one illegal campsite at a hitchrack near Hughes Ridge Trail.

Trail - Increase maintenance and stabilize use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAILS 1315 AND 1316

HUGHES RIDGE TRAIL - THE AT TO QUEEN MOUNTAIN TRAIL

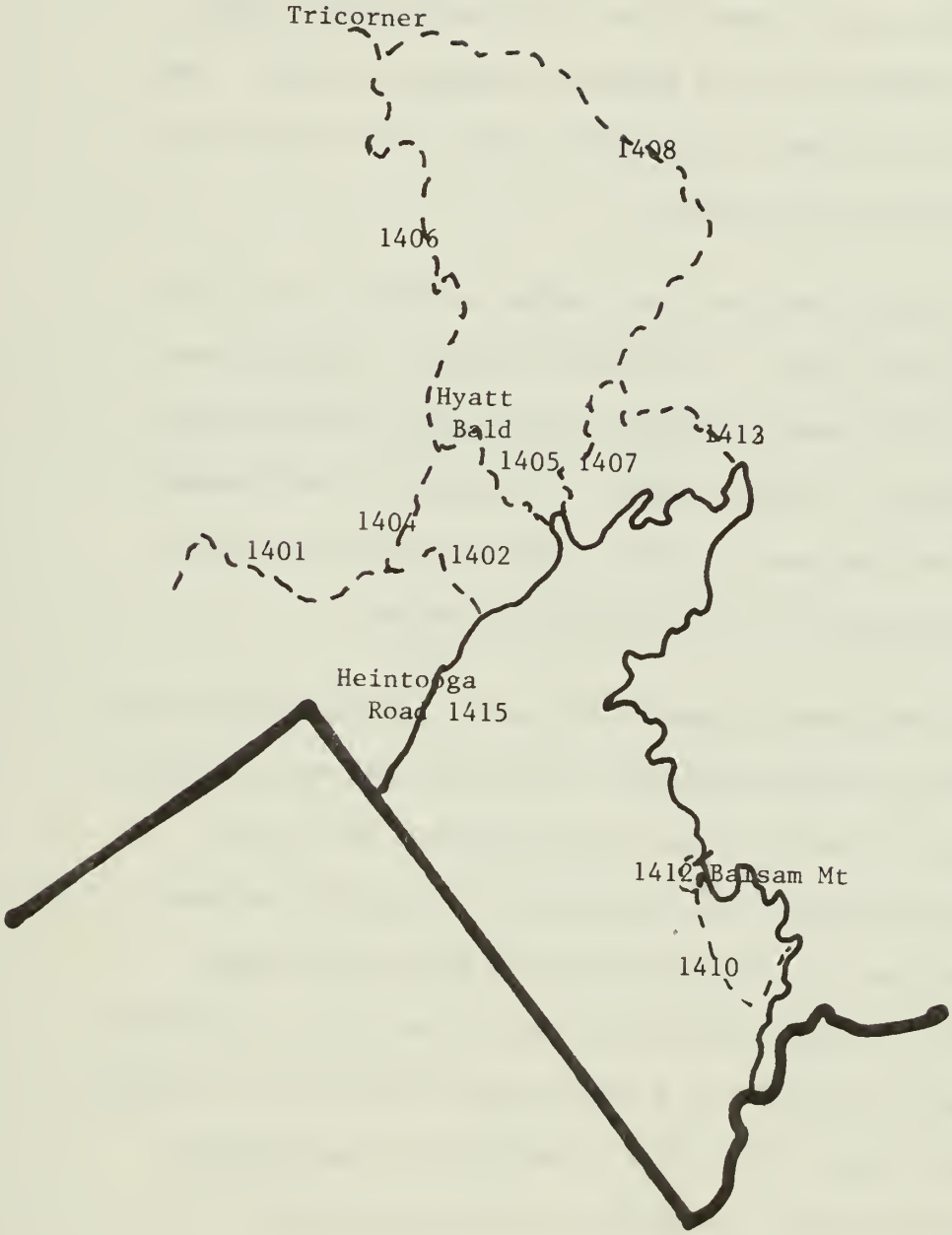
Back packers, horsemen, and some day hikers use this trail. The trail is in poor to excellent condition, depending on the section. Erosion is worst at the upper and lower ends. Near Pecks Corner the trail runs through spruce-fir forest, where the water erosion and heavy use have left exposed rock and tree roots. In the oak forests below, trail conditions improve, but there is still rutting where the trail runs down little knolls. This pattern is followed throughout its length. Many of the sections running along the contour are in excellent condition, but on grades there is horse plow, ruts, and water erosion. If horse use was reduced and maintenance increased, backpacker and day hiker use could be greatly increased.

There are a few scattered illegal sites on the ridge, and there is the potential for adding some small (possibly "no water") campsites. Horse camping is not appropriate. There is an illegal site with a fine view between the Taywa and Chasteen intersections which could probably support two parties a night. A flat shoulder near Becks Bald is another possibility.

Trail - Stabilize horse use; increase maintenance.

Campsites - Additions possible of small one or two parties per night type sites.

SECTION 14 - HEINTOOGA



TRAIL 1401

ENLOE RIDGE TRAIL

Backpackers and horsemen travel this path through virgin hardwood stands to get to Enloe and Ravensford Creeks. The fishing is excellent, though Enloe Creek is now closed due to the brook trout's status.

Mud, rutting, horse plow, bare rocks, and roots are all too common on this trail. At several locations, toppled trees near the trail have left rocky, water-eroded patches which make walking or riding a chore. An increase in maintenance as well as a decrease in horse traffic is crucial if this beautiful trail is not to deteriorate further.

There is one large illegal horse camp on Enloe Creek which is a popular spot with fishermen. With the creek now closed to fishing, its future status is questionable, but it will probably continue to receive visitors, especially poachers. The trail down to the site was poorly placed on a steep incline. The legal site is located at the ford on Ravensford Creek and is confined to a small area by the creek on one side and steep hills on the other. Sanitation is questionable so near the water, firewood is scarce, and use should be limited to smaller groups.

Trail - Decrease horse traffic and increase maintenance.

Campsites - Illegal site would make a good legal one;

legal site should be limited to small groups.

TRAIL 1402

HORSE TRAIL FROM HEINTOOGA TO HYATT RIDGE

This trail is used largely by horse parties and backpackers. The trail is jeep width and in fair-to-poor condition.

This trail is very stony. Side erosion and water are both problems in localized sections. There are several areas of exposed rock, so that the condition of the trail makes walking moderately rough. An increase in foot use would probably not greatly change the condition of the trail, but a great increase in horse use would probably cause further damage.

No campsites were found along the trail, and most of the slopes are too steep for a large campsite. Most of the trail is also too close to the road for backcountry camping.

Trail - Stabilize horse use.

Campsites - No additional sites.

TRAIL 1405

HYATT RIDGE TRAIL - RAVENSFORD ROAD TO RIDGE TOP

This trail is used used moderately by backpackers, horsemen, and day hikers. Day hikers can loop and come out a mile down the road from their starting point. Others head for McGhee Springs campsite or else go to Tri-Corner Knob Shelter on the Appalachian Trail.

The trail climbs steadily, with some signs of water erosion but nothing serious. Mud is found around the numerous streams that cross the path but it is easily negotiable.

There are no campsites, legal or illegal.

Trail - Stabilize use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAILS 1404 AND 1406

HYATT RIDGE TRAIL - ENLOE RIDGE TRAIL TO BALSAM MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Hyatt Ridge is an old manway which has only recently become a maintained park trail.

Problems start as the ridge trail climbs through beech-hemlock and spruce forests (mostly mature). Mud is prevalent over much of the last 3 miles. The path widens to greater than a meter in many places where people and horses have tried to dodge the miry earth. Exposed roots and bare rocks are present throughout. The condition of the trail makes walking extremely difficult in the middle sections. The upper end of the trail, through spruce-fir forest, is in somewhat better condition. The trail needs very intensive maintenance and certain sections should possibly be rerouted.

McGhee Springs campsite (44) is moderately used and in fair condition. It is difficult to find a flat spot to pitch tents. The spring has a modest, though adequate, flow for the amount of use it receives. It is located 20 meters below the site, which makes sanitation and water quality questionable. Placement of additional sites is limited by limited trail conditions.

Trail - Decrease horse use; add water logs and gravel as needed; intensive maintenance or move trail.

Campsites - Stabilize use.

TRAIL 1407

BEECH GAP TRAIL

This trail is used regularly by backpackers, horsemen, and occasional day hikers. Laurel Gap Shelter is 2 miles farther, on Balsam Mountain Trail, and is probably a common goal for backpackers. Horsemen are likely to be making dialy trips from Campsite 46 or be heading towards Walnut Bottom, another horse camp.

Erosion is generally minimal and the trail is in good-to-fair condition. A few exposed roots and bank erosion are found along its entirety, but more severely eroded patches are infrequent and are caused by rain and water from streams running across the trail.

The one campsite at the lower end is a drive-in horse camp which is in excellent condition. The camp has a carrying capacity of 20, but no more than 12 to 15 usually camp there at one time. Level places for pitching tents are few, and there are only two fire pits. Trash levels are low, as the site is easily accessible by maintenance crews.

Trail - Traffic should be held at present level and maintenance should be watched more closely.

Campsites - If Heintooga Road is closed, a site could be added near Beech Gap.

TRAILS 1408 AND 1413

BALSAM MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Balsam Mountain Trail follows the ridge top of the longest spur off the Appalachian Trail in the park. The trail is used by backpackers and horsemen.

As is typical of trails through spruce-fir forest, the soil has washed away to expose rocks and roots. Exposed roots are a problem throughout, and there are local areas with water erosion and bare rock. Most of the trail is well-constructed and graded. Water bars are essential to prevent further deterioration, and the trail cannot tolerate an increase in use. No horses are allowed above the Walnut Bottoms turnoff, and a slight decrease in horse traffic below is advisable.

Laurel Gap shelter is one of the best-maintained shelters in the system. This is partially due to its location off the Appalachian Trail and the fact that it has received a fair, rather than overtaxing, visitor load.

Trail - Increase maintenance. Slight decrease in horse traffic; stabilize foot use.

Campsites - No change. Add site at lower end if Heintooga Road is closed.

TRAILS 1410, 1411, AND 1412

TRAILS NEAR BALSAM MOUNTAIN CAMPGROUND

There are a series of small trails around the campground at Balsam Mountain. These are intensively used by day hikers and are in erosion-sensitive spruce-fir forest.

There are a number of areas with ruts or exposed routes and guffer reroutes. Intensive maintenance is necessary in this area.

Trails - Keep maintenance intensive.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1415

HEINTOOGA LOOP ROAD

Heintooga Road is used as an automobile road in the summer season. In the winter it is closed and becomes a major access trail to the Balsam Mountain area. It has been included here since it could, at some time in the future, become part of the trail system. Some sections of this road are now used by backpackers as a connector between trails.

The road is generally in good condition. There is some water erosion. Bank erosion and small ruts are common, but these are caused by vehicles. If the road were to be converted to trail status, some problems with water erosion would be likely to develop in the draws and on the steeper sections. In general, the road could absorb heavy foot use and horse traffic.

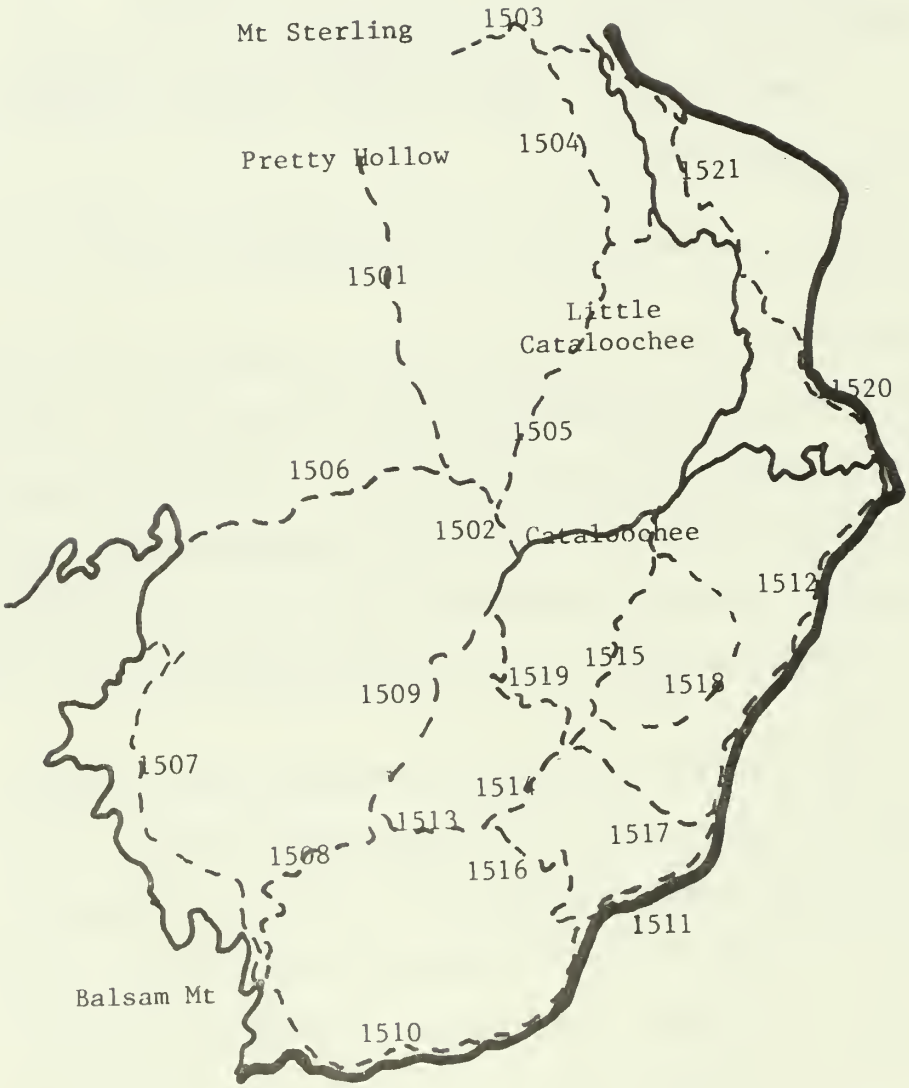
A number of small illegal campsites were located along the road. Old Round Bottom campground is still used for camping and picnicking and has a large disturbed site near Straight Fork. If the road were converted to trail, several sites are suitable for backcountry camping areas, especially on the western half of the road. Steep slopes and lack of water would limit camping on the eastern half. Already damaged areas,

such as the gap on Trail Ridge, could be used if trails were established to water.

Trail - Could be converted to high impact trail.

Campsites - Some difficulty establishing sites along the eastern half. Camping could be extended along the western end.

SECTION 15 - CATALOOCHEE



TRAILS 1501 AND 1502

PRETTY HOLLOW CREEK TRAIL

This trail is used primarily by backpackers, horse parties, and occasional day hikers. It intersects several other trails, providing access to campsites, and use by campers (both on horseback and on foot) is probably moderately heavy.

Surface erosion, with exposed rocks and roots, is the most serious problem on the trail, and damage to the surface is severe in places. The trail is also quite muddy.

The horse camp is very large and gets heavy use, often by large groups. Despite this fact, the site is in fair condition with only small areas of bare soil and erosion. The location of the camp in a flat successional area dominated by grasses and sedges has, no doubt, contributed to its ability to withstand heavy use impact. The only hazard is the camp's proximity to the creek and the potential of water pollution. An illegal campsite located in Pretty Hollow Gap gets regular use, resulting in a moderate amount of vegetation damage. The site is in an area of sensitive vegetation, and use should be better patrolled.

Trail - Much of the trail is eroded and increased maintenance and/or reduction in traffic is needed.

Campsites - No change.

TRAIL 1503

TRAIL TO MOUNT STERLING FROM STERLING GAP

The trail runs along a restricted jeep trail and gets heavy use from day hikers, horse parties, and backpackers. It gets limited vehicle use as well. The trail can be used to reach most major trails in the area, and the tower on Mount Sterling is a popular day hike.

The trail is steep, and surface erosion and exposed rocks are prevalent. Side and bank erosion are of moderate extent. If the trail is to continue to support present traffic loads, increased maintenance with attention given to preserving the surface soil will be necessary.

The trail has no campsites and none are needed, because of the short distance to Mount Sterling.

Trail - With good maintenance, can sustain present use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1504

HORSE TRAIL - MOUNT STERLING ROAD TO LITTLE CATALOOCHEE

This trail appears to be used primarily by horse parties, with an occasional hiker.

The trail is in fair condition. It is lightly used and narrow. It is horse plowed and muddy in places. Although the present condition of the trail does not impede foot travel greatly, an increase in use is likely to cause further deterioration. The trail is well placed on the slope and shows evidence of water erosion as it drops into the stream valleys. The lower end of the road, which is a surfaced jeep trail, is in good condition.

The trail could tolerate more hiker impact, but there is likely to be a conflict with horse users. There are presently no campsites on this trail, but there are old homesites where a campsite could be established.

Trail - Can tolerate increased hiker use and light camping.

Campsites - Additions possible.

TRAIL 1505

ROAD AND HORSE TRAIL -

LITTLE CATALOOCHEE TO BIG CATALOOCHEE THROUGH DAVIDSON GAP

This trail appears to be used primarily by horse parties and a few day hikers, particularly in Little Cataloochee.

The jeep road is in good condition, but the unsurfaced sections of horse trail are in poor condition. The section of trail through Davidson Gap is steep, follows the slope, and is horse plowed and eroded by water. The section paralleling Davidson Branch is in better condition, but is still muddy and has a number of mudholes in poorly drained patches. The trail, although it is not surfaced, averages about 200 centimeters in width.

Decreasing horse use would decrease erosion, but some of the trail is steep and would probably have to be rerouted if a significant improvement in condition can be expected.

The trail could probably tolerate increased hiker use if horse use is decreased. A few extra hikers, even under present conditions, would probably make a difference in terms of erosion. There are no legal camps on this trail, although there are several good sites for them. The church and old homesites (still standing) need to be avoided to prevent vandalism.

The area offers good potential for increased hiker use if damage can be controlled.

Trail - Decrease horse use or increase maintenance.

Campsites - Campsites could be added.

TRAIL 1506

BEECH CREEK TRAIL - HORSE TRAIL FROM HEINTOOGA ROAD TO CATALOOCHEE CREEK

This trail is used by horse parties, backpackers, and occasional day hikers, the latter probably largely at the lower end. The trail is mostly in fair condition. There is some mud and deep horse plowing near the stream crossings.

The trail passes through mature cove forest at the lower end and makes an easy day hike along the lower section.

Most of the erosion on this trail appears to be due to horse use, which should be stabilized. The slopes of the trail are steep and offer few good campsites, except at the upper and lower ends. An increase in hiker traffic could be better absorbed than an increase in horse traffic.

Trail - Stabilize horse use.

Campsites - Possibly add a small backpacker site if a place can be found. Camping limited by topography.

TRAIL 1507

TRAIL FROM POLLS GAP TO SPRUCE MOUNTAIN

This is a maintained foot and horse trail which is used by day hikers, backpackers, and horse parties. The trail starts off in moderate condition at Polls Gap, but soon deteriorates and is in poor condition most of the way to Spruce Mountain. Much of the difficulty appears to be due to water erosion rather than to intensive use. There are both intermittent gullies and mudholes, with short stretches of trail in fair-to-good condition.

Aphid kill has caused openings in the canopy which encourage the growth of blackberries. These shrubs are choking out the trail in places. As the aphid continues to attack stands, some extra maintenance may be required to keep the trails clear.

The location of this trail on the slope makes it difficult to maintain and control erosion. Like some sections of the Appalachian Trail, it will be difficult to improve without rerouting.

Illegal camping is not a problem except around the firetower. An increase in visitor use is limited by trail conditions and

closeness to the road. The tower area is already disturbed and, if the buildings are removed, can tolerate heavy use. The section of trail from Heintooga Road to the tower is stony and eroded but could tolerate more foot use. The campsites offer good possibilities for an easy quiet overnight stay.

Trail - Stabilize use, particularly horse use.

Campsites - Maintain sites as they are or increase at tower (not horse parties).

TRAILS 1508 AND 1509

LITTLE RIDGE TRAIL - ROUGH FORK TO POLLS GAP

This is a horse and foot trail on which horses seem to make up a major portion of the traffic. There is probably a small amount of day hiker use at either end. The lower mile of the trail is a restricted jeep trail and is in good condition, with only minor problems with mud and surface erosion. The rest of the trail is trail width and has more serious problems with erosion. The middle section runs on steep grades and is badly horse plowed and muddy in places. Bank erosion is prevalent on the steep cuts. The southern end of the trail follows the contour and is in fair condition. A small increase in foot use is presently possible, but horse traffic must be stabilized.

Campsite 40 is heavily used and often supports large numbers of groups. The site is diffuse, consisting of ten widely spaced clearings cut in a rhododendron thicket, with evidence of recent expansion. Despite heavy use, the impenetrable vegetation has kept the areas of bare soil and vegetation damage to a minimum. The site can withstand heavy use, but visitation should be strictly limited to fewer than 10 parties at a time to prevent further expansion.

There is no evidence of illegal camping along the trail.

Trail - Stabilize horse use. Maintenance along some of the muddy sectons would increase the carrying capacity of the trail.

Campsites - A campsite could be established towards the southern end of the trail, which would help take the burden off of Campsites 40 and 41 and would also open up a reasonable three-day round trip backpacker loop from Cataloochee via Spruce Mountain.

TRAIL 1510

CATALOOCHEE DIVIDE TRAIL - POLLS GAP TO DOUBLE GAP

This trail is often used by private horse parties and is occasionally used by day hikers and backpackers. There is access by jeep road to much of Cataloochee Divide, and use by local people, including poachers, is probably greater than on many of the trails more towards the interior of the park.

The trail starts from Polls Gap in good condition but grades into fair condition around Buck Knob and is locally in poor condition in some areas near Hemphill Bald. The trail is variable in both width and condition. Although some erosion is due to water action on the steeper sections, horse plowing is the cause of much of the mud, ruts, and bank erosion. If hiker use were to increase, a decrease in horse use would be recommended. Rerouting the trail near some of the trouble spots might help, but hiker use at these places would not cause the extensive muddy areas caused by horses.

Trail - Increase foot use; stabilize horse use.

Campsites - Addition possible - small site on knob, for instance.

TRAIL 1511

CATALOOCHEE DIVIDE TRAIL - DOUBLE GAP TO MCKEE BRANCH TRAIL

This section of trail is heavily used by private horse parties and occasionally is used by day hikers and backpackers. Local use is probably heavy.

The trail is in poor condition, and extensive sections are horse plowed and muddy. The trail is widened and rutted due to horse use. An increase in maintenance is unlikely to be effective without either substantially rerouting the trail or decreasing horse use.

Trail - Horse use needs to be controlled.

Campsites - Addition possible at one of the gaps.

TRAIL 1512

CATALOOCHEE DIVIDE TRAIL -

MCKEE BRANCH TRAIL TO COVE CREEK GAP BRANCH

This trail is occasionally used by horse parties, day hikers, and backpackers and probably sustains some use by local people.

The trail is in good-to-excellent condition through most of its length. There is a small amount of rut and horse plow, and almost no evidence of water erosion. The trail could tolerate a considerable increase in hiker traffic and a small increase in horse traffic.

CAMPING ON CATALOOCHEE DIVIDE

There are no legal campsites on the Divide trail and only one illegal site was located inside the park boundary. There were several campsites outside the park boundary, however, and at least one of these was well maintained and intensively used (at Double Gap). Camping along the divide is probably regularly practiced by local hikers and horsemen familiar with the area, but is rarely done by backpackers who are not familiar with Cataloochee.

Establishing a legal site for backpackers might help draw traffic out from Cove Creek Gap, but finding water may be a

problem. Most of the other sections of trail in the area are eroded by horse traffic and some are not in good condition for foot travelers. The heavy horse use probably inhibits increased backpacking use.

Trail - Increase foot use on all but middle section.
Decrease horse use in middle.

Campsites - No additions if horse use continues at present level.

TRAILS 1513 AND 1514

TRAIL FROM LITTLE RIDGE TO DOUBLE GAP BRANCH

This trail forms part of a common backpacker/horse party route and is also part of a reasonable day trip loop from Cataloochee either by horse or on foot. The trail is very muddy and is being damaged by intensive horse use. Exposed rocks and roots are also prevalent on the upper section and, combined with horse plowed mud, make for difficult walking in places. The attractions on the trail include the campsite, old home sites, and a huge tulip poplar tree which is advertised on a sign at the trailhead. Little attention has been given to maintenance of the trail surface and more is needed. Much of the damage stems from excessive horse traffic, and a reduction in horse use would probably result in improved trail condition. The establishment of a new campsite towards the southern end of the Little Ridge Trail would help to accomplish this by drawing some traffic away from this trail.

Campsite 41 is large and gets regular heavy use, but it is well located in an old homesite and can take the heavy impact without incurring significant damage.

The only illegal site is located at the big poplar and it seems to get fairly regular use. The site is poorly drained and muddy and is unsightly to those who come to visit the big poplars. Use of this site should be discouraged.

Trail - Try to reduce horse traffic. A new campsite on the Little Ridge Trail might help. Maintenance of the trail surface, particularly at the upper end, is needed.

Campsites - Discourage use of illegal site at the big poplars.

TRAIL 1515

CALDWELL FORK TRAIL

This old jeep trail receives moderate-to-heavy use from horses, backpackers, and day hikers. The trailhead is easily accessible from the campground at Cataloochee and provides access to several other trails and campsites. The trail is excessively muddy and shows signs of excessive horse plowing. Rerouting around mudholes is causing widening and vegetation damage along the edges of the trail. On some of the steeper slopes, surface erosion is present.

The poorly drained nature of the trail makes it unsuitable for bearing heavy traffic loads. Horse traffic is particularly damaging. A sizeable reduction in horse traffic, coupled with stepped up maintenance, is necessary if the trail surface is to be stabilized. There are no campsites on the trail and none should be contemplated.

The trail has been rerouted around a badly eroded section of the trail at the northern end. This reroute is presently in very good condition and shows little sign of damage.

Trail - Reduce horse use. If day use increases in the area, eliminate horse use.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1516

DOUBLE GAP BRANCH TRAIL

The trail appears to be used primarily by horse parties. From inside the park the trail can be reached from either Cataloochee or the Heintooga Road, but many of the users come in on spur trails from outside the park. Hemphill Bald is located at the top of the trail and would normally be expected to attract a substantial number of hikers to the area, but the long day hike from Cataloochee (14 miles round trip) and the lack of campsites in the area keep foot use low.

The trail is severely horse plowed, and churned up soil extends across the entire cut. There is virtually no buffer zone vegetation anywhere on the trail cut. The trail is muddy, even in dry weather, and would be exceedingly unpleasant to walk over after rains. At the present there are only a few small areas where the soil has washed away, leaving a rock substrate, but the surface does not appear to be stable and there is evidence that surface erosion is in process on some of the steeper grades.

There are no campsites on the trail but, because the trail is already above its carrying capacity due to heavy horse use, it is probably not wise to encourage more backpacker use in the area by establishing a site.

Trail - A reduction in horse traffic would be desirable if the trail is to be returned to acceptable standards. Intensified maintenance might also be effective. In any event, no increase in either horse or foot traffic should be encouraged.

Campsites - No change while trail is in poor condition.

TRAIL 1517

MCKEE BRANCH TRAIL

This trail receives light use, mostly from horse parties. It has no campsites and is not a logical backpacker route between campsites in the area. There are no notable attractions along the trail. Although the trail is little used, it is close to its proper carrying capacity. It follows steep grades and is often struck straight up and down the slope, both of which have contributed to moderate amounts of water erosion in the cut. Much of the trail is rutted and rocky.

There is no camping on the trail and, because the trail is already at carrying capacity, it is probably best not to establish any sites here.

Trail - No change.

Campsites - No change, unless horse use is reduced.

TRAIL 1518

BOOGERMAN TRAIL

This trail forms a loop with a part of the Caldwell Fork trail and is a good day's hike from the Cataloochee campgrounds. Most of the use is from day hikers and day horse trips. Backpackers and horse campers probably rarely use the trail because it has no camping facilities. To use it to reach the campsites on Caldwell Fork or the Little Ridge Trail adds 4 miles to the trip. Aside from old homesites, the trail has little to offer in terms of scenic attractions.

The trail, for the most part, is in fair condition, having a narrow tread and only minor amounts of surface erosion and mud. However, for short stretches at either end where the trail follows streambeds, there are excessive amounts of mud and surface erosion. Horse plow is in evidence throughout most of the trail and, although horse damage to the surface is presently limited to the muddy areas and steeper grades, an increase in horse traffic would be undesirable. An increase in foot traffic could be recommended if the trouble spots at either end of the trail received intensive repair and maintenance.

Trail - Increase in foot use is possible; possibly ban horse use.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 1519

TRAIL FROM ROUGH FORK TO CALDWELL FORK

This trail is used regularly by horses and backpackers and receives a fair amount of day hiker use as well. The trail provides access to Campsite 41 and can be used as part of a day hike loop.

The trail is maintained to a width of about two meters, much greater than is needed for foot and horse travel, and follows the route of an old road. The northern portion of the trail is rather muddy in places and is being damaged by excessive horse use. Towards the southern end, it runs through more xeric forest types, and mud and horse damage become less evident.

With a small amount of maintenance at the northern end to drain mudholes, the trail can continue with present patterns of usage without further deterioration. But the tread is presently a great deal wider than it need be and a reduction might be advisable. To accomplish this would require a reduction in horse use and an increase in maintenance

There are no campsites on the trail and none are needed.

Trail - Slight increase in maintenance; increase in foot use.

Campsites - Probably no additions.

TRAILS 1520 AND 1521

ASBURY TRAIL

This trail is a foot trail which is largely unmaintained and is only for more adventurous hikers. The trail is largely in good condition due to its light use but is in a poor location on the slope and should be rerouted so it could support more traffic. The trail is often steep and follows the same grade as the slope.

The trail is blazed but is hard to follow. It reroutes frequently around tree falls. The hiker frequently has to go over or under logs or through bushes. One section of trail near Cataloochee Creek is very eroded and runs in the streambed,

The trail could tolerate more hiker use, but has few attractions other than a wilderness experience. There are several possible sites for small camps, but as long as the trail is unmaintained, it would be difficult traveling for full packers.

Trail - Slight increase in use.

Campsites - Add a site if maintenance changes.

SECTION 16 - BIG CREEK

TRAIL 1601

YELLOW CREEK TRAIL -

CAMEL GAP TO WALNUT BOTTOMS

This trail is largely used by backpackers, fishermen, and occasional horse parties. The trail is in good-to-fair condition. Illegal camping is common along Big Creek.

The upper end of trail is generally in good condition but shows evidence of water or bank erosion in a few places. With a slight increase in maintenance, hiker use could be increased. The section of the trail along the creek appears to be more heavily used. This section of the trail also has more water erosion and more bare rock and is in fair-to-good condition. More horse use would damage the trail, although a small increase in hiker use could be absorbed. Some increase in maintenance would help to control water and bank erosion.

The area is frequently used for illegal camping and has no legal sites. Better patrol would help, in the case of fish camps, and a legal site could easily be established somewhere near the upper end of the creek. The site should be carefully located to avoid steep banks and poor drainage and should avoid areas with profuse floral growth. Horse camping should

not be encouraged because the trail will not support heavy horse use. The remaining illegal sites should be cleaned up and covered with a little brush to allow regeneration of the vegetation. The illegal site at the upper end of Big Creek is regularly used and is causing bank erosion.

Trail - Stabilize horse use. Slight increase in hiker use.

Campsites - Patrol and remove illegal sites. Add legal site.

TRAIL 1602

GUNTER FORK TRAIL

The trail is used primarily by backpackers traveling between Walnut Bottoms and the Balsam Mountain area. There is a small amount of horse use on the lower end of the trail. Day hiker use is probably negligible. The trail does not appear to be heavily used.

The trail is well graded and the tread is narrow for the most part, but towards the middle and upper end there are several areas where the bank has slumped and filled in most of the cut. This has forced hikers to the outside and has resulted in some downslope bank erosion. Aside from this, the only trail damage observed consisted of minor amounts of exposed rock and some bank erosion. As it stands now, the lower portion of the trail could take increased impact, and the upper part is at carrying capacity, but if the cut was reworked in a few places, the whole trail could be recommended for increased hiker use.

There are no legal camping facilities on the trail, but three illegal sites were encountered. One of these, located at the junction with the Big Creek Jeep Trail, receives regular use and is probably part of the whole complex of illegal sites

associated with Walnut Bottoms. The other two sites appeared to be rarely used.

Trail - With a little maintenance at the upper end, the trail could easily support more hiker impact. More backpackers could be attracted to the trail if the Gunter Creek Cascades were publicized and a small backcountry campsite was established on the trail.

Campsites - The Walnut Bottoms area needs more camping facilities to help take some of the burden off the Walnut Bottoms campsite. The Gunter Fork Trail could absorb the increased hiker use that a new site would draw, and there are several good potential locations on the flats near the middle of the trail.

TRAIL 1603

WALNUT BOTTOMS TRAIL TO LOW GAP

This trail is largely used by backpackers and horse parties. It is in fair to poor condition.

The most serious erosion problems on this trail are due to water action on the steep grades in the middle section. The trail's width and surface in the level areas also indicate that the trail is receiving substantial use and is near carrying capacity as it is presently maintained. Increased maintenance is necessary in the middle section, which is down to bedrock due to water erosion. The trail is rough under foot and makes walking somewhat difficult in places.

Because of the steep slopes, there is little evidence of illegal camping above the flats on Big Creek where one illegal site was found. Because of the availability of camping at Walnut Bottoms and the present condition of the trail, no increase in campsites is recommended. The trail should remain primarily as an access from the Appalachian Trail and Cosby to Walnut Bottoms.

Trail - Stabilize use; increase maintenance.

Campsites - Increase patrol; no additional sites.

TRAIL 1604

BIG CREEK JEEP TRAIL -

RANGER STATION TO WALNUT BOTTOMS

This trail is heavily used by backpackers, horse parties, and day hikers. Most of the day hikers probably originate at the Big Creek Campground and are attracted by the scenery and swimming along Big Creek. Backpackers and horse campers are attracted by the central location of the Walnut Bottoms Campsite. The whole northeastern section of the park can be reached from five intersecting trails which radiate out from Walnut Bottoms in all directions. Its central location makes Walnut Creek a popular starting point for backpacking trips.

The trail is on a recently closed gravel surfaced jeep road and despite heavy use, the surface, although wide, is in good condition and can take an increase in both horse and foot traffic. Minor amounts of horse plow and exposed rock are the only erosion problems.

Walnut Bottoms is, by far, the most heavily used backcountry campsite in the park.

The area of heaviest impact associated with the site is approximately 25,000 squate meters. Cut stumps from firewood gathering are all along the sides of the road for one-fourth mile in either direction from the site. Mud, dirt, and vegetation damage are all excessively high. The official capacity for the site is 40 people, but the actual number of tent spaces is closer to 100. It is likely that the site supports over 100 campers at one time on peak visitor weekends. There is also a great deal of illegal camping on the flats above and below Walnut Bottoms. Much of this is probably due to campers who become discouraged by the crowded conditions at Walnut Bottoms and seek out more private spots on the flats nearby.

Trail - The trail can withstand considerable impact so that the only factor limiting increased use of the trail is the ability of campsites in the area to support the load. Day hiking could be encouraged.

Campsites - Since Walnut Bottom's location at the junction of five major trails and the scarcity of other campsites in the area have resulted in intense camping pressures on this campsite, the only practical means of reducing its overuse is to establish additional sites on some of the trails

leading into Walnut Bottoms. A study of traffic patterns and camping needs in the area should be conducted to determine the camping needs of the area.

TRAIL 1605

SWALLOW FORK TRAIL

The Swallow Fork Trail is used primarily by backpackers and horse campers and provides the most direct route between the Laurel Gap shelter and Mount Sterling. Although there are more direct routes, the trail can also be used to reach Campsites 37 and 39 from the Balsam Mountain Trail. The trail is too remote for much day hiker use and has little in the way of scenic attractions.

The upper part of the trail is cut to trail width and runs on steep grades. Surface erosion is extensive here, and ruts, mud, and side erosion are abundant. In some areas, buffer zone vegetation has been destroyed by hikers and horses walking on the outside of the cut to avoid rocky areas and mudholes. Downslope side erosion has also resulted. The lower part of the trail is on an old road cut and tends to follow gentler grades. The surface has been trenched to channel runoff water out of the cut, and surface erosion is not so extensive here.

The only campsite on the trail is a regularly-used illegal site located about 1.5 miles below Pretty Hollow Gap. It should make a good maintained site but, unless trail conditions

can be improved by maintenance, establishment of a site here is not desirable. If the upper part of the trail could be upgraded to the point where it could support more traffic without incurring excessive damage, a maintained site would be desirable to help remove some of the overuse of Walnut Bottoms.

Trail - If intensified maintenance would be effective in improving trail conditions on the upper part of the trail, an increased traffic load could be supported. Otherwise, an increase would not be desirable.

Campsites - A new site could be established on the trail to help relieve the pressure at Walnut Bottoms if trail conditions were improved.

TRAIL 1606

STERLING RIDGE TRAIL -

LAUREL GAP TO PRETTY HOLLOW

The trail is lightly used by backpackers and horse campers as a connector between Walnut Bottoms and the Sterling Ridge Trail. An occasional long-distance day hiker may use the trail as well.

The trail runs through sensitive, high elevation forest types and, despite gentle grades and relatively low usage, it is near its carrying capacity. Tread widths are relatively narrow except on the steep grade just above Walnut Bottoms, but mud, ruts, and surface erosion are prevalent throughout.

There are no campsites on the trail and, because the trail is at carrying capacity, it is probably wisest not to establish any.

Trail - The trail can probably continue to take present traffic loads without a change in maintenance status.

Campsites - None.

TRAIL 1607

STERLING RIDGE TRIAL

This trail is a major backpacker and horse party route providing access to several important trails and campsites in the park. The tread is excessively wide, and the trail shows evidence of both surface erosion and mud. Some of the erosion stems from steep grades and the location of the trail in high elevation spruce and northern hardwood forests. It is unlikely, even with intensified maintenance, that the trail can be improved significantly. A decrease in horse traffic, coupled with increased maintenance, might prove effective.

There are no campsites on the trail and none are necessary.

Trail - Discourage horse traffic and increase maintenance.

Campsites - No additions.

TRAIL 1607

MOUNT STERLING TOWER ROAD AND MOUNT STERLING TOWER

The Mount Sterling area is heavily used by backpackers, day hikers, and horse parties. The old jeep trail is in fair-to-poor condition.

The old jeep trail to Mount Sterling is mildly rutted and has a number of mudholes and eroded areas. Better maintenance would help control water erosion.

The campsite at the top of Mount Sterling has spread from the horse hitchrack around the cabin and the fire tower. Wood gathering is very extensive for about 100 meters on all sides of the tower. The site is heavily used. Many campers probably camp under the tower without realizing that the legal campsite is actually located below the cabin. The "legal" section of the site appeared to be less heavily used than the tower section. The use of the area around the tower causes little further environmental damage, but the scattered use in the woods is slowly removing the understory. Better marking and probably a reduction of use for this site are recommended.

Trail - Stabilize use; more maintenance.

Campsites - Curtail use and better delimit site.

TRAIL 1609

AT CONNECTOR FROM BIG CREEK RANGER STATION

This trail is used primarily by backpackers traveling to and from the Appalachian Trail. The trail is in fair condition due to water erosion in stretches. The trail narrows at the upper end but there is some exposed rock and roots. Foot use can be carried at the present level or slight increased. Control of water erosion is desirable.

Trail - Slight increase in foot use possible.

Campsites - No additions.